

LIFE AND WORKS OF RATAN NATH SARSHAR

by

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of London
School of Oriental and African Studies
July 1964

1964

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ABSTRACT

The introduction sets out the importance of a full-length study of Sarshār's work for an understanding of the history of Urdu prose narrative. Such information as is available about his life is given in Chapter I, together with a brief account of his works related to the various periods of his life in which they were written. The historical setting of his life and work is then considered, with particular reference to Lucknow, the city where he spent most of his life and to which his works are intimately related (Chapter II). Chapter III examines his early work (pre-1879) showing how his main ideas were formed before he attempted the task of presenting them through the medium of fictional narrative. The existing tradition of prose narrative fiction is then discussed (Chapter IV), since Sarshār's first and greatest work is closely linked with this tradition. Chapters V-IX examine his major works one by one, showing the steady development of Sarshār's art towards the standards of the modern novel (Chapters V-VII), a later reversion to the older tradition (Chapter VIII), and a final period of very rapid decline (Chapter IX). The account of his major works is completed by a chapter on his translations (Chapter X), and finally a conclusion briefly sums up Sarshār's position in the history of Urdu prose fiction.

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INTRODUCTION

Ratan Nāth Sarshār has long been recognised as one of the pioneers of modern fiction in Urdu; yet no satisfactory full-length study of his life and works has yet appeared either in Urdu or in English. Significant of the neglect with which he has been treated is the fact that the brief essay by Chakbast, written not long after Sarshār's death in 1903, has remained the basis for almost everything that has subsequently been written about him, for virtually no factual information about his life and works has been brought to light to supplement Chakbast's account. Yet Chakbast himself lamented the paucity of information available to him, and close examination of even such information as he gives shows it in many cases to be far from reliable. The situation is not much better in regard to the critical assessment of his work. He has been the subject of innumerable essays, but the majority of these limit themselves almost entirely to a consideration of a single work, Fasāna i Āzād, and this too - in many cases appears to be based upon a quite incomplete and inadequate study of the book. Only 'Alī 'Abbās Ḥusainī's treatment in his Nāval kī Tārīkh aur Tanqīd shows evidence of a full study of Fasāna i Āzād and gives some measure of attention also to Sarshār's other major writings.

Unfortunately not all the materials necessary to a complete study are now available, and this is true of all

periods of his life. For information about his earliest articles we are dependent entirely on Chakbast's statements, and yet where it is possible to check them in any degree they seem to be inaccurate or at least unsupported by solid evidence. The periodical supplements of Avadh Akhbār in which the latter instalments of Fasāna i Azād and of Fasāna i Jadīd were issued are nowhere obtainable. The files of rival periodicals to Avadh Akhbār, in which controversy over Sarshār's writings raged, cannot be found. Finally even a number of his works which Sarshār himself has mentioned by name cannot be traced - indeed, they seem already to have been untraceable at the time when Chakbast wrote.

Nevertheless sufficient materials are available in the India Office Library and the British Museum to make an adequate study possible. In particular, Sarshār's earliest book Shams uz zuhā and a complete file of Avadh Akhbār covering the period when it achieved its greatest success under Sarshār's editorship are available in the British Museum. Similarly all the major works of prose fiction and all the major translations are available in London. Full use has been made of all these materials in preparing the present thesis. Works which cannot now be traced comprise two translations (of which one is only a pamphlet) and a few works of fiction belonging to the last period of his life; and the works of this period which do survive show clearly enough that their loss is not a serious one. Thus the gaps

in our knowledge are not so great as to suggest that if they could have been filled a significantly different picture might have emerged.

Sarshār's importance as a writer is threefold. First, one finds in his works an unrivalled picture of Lucknow society in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Secondly, his constant preoccupation with the new intellectual, social and political ideas of his time gives an exceptionally clear picture of what were the great controversial issues of the day. And thirdly, his choice of a fictional medium through which to express his ideas, his attachment to the old prose narrative tradition, his conscious attempt to mould his own tales on the pattern of the European novel, and the considerable talents which he brought to his task gives his works an exceptional interest and importance in the history of Urdu literature. It is this last aspect which forms the central theme of the present study, but the didactic aim is so prominent in all Sarshār's work that this too must necessarily receive detailed attention, and a picture is thus presented of Sarshār's development both as an artist and as a propagandist of the new ideas of his time.

It is not too much to say that historians and critics of Urdu literature have not only shrunk from the task of thoroughly studying his voluminous works - 'Alī

'Abbās Husainī is an honourable exception here - but have also given insufficient thought to the question of establishing their place in the history of Urdu prose fiction, and - what is closely connected with this problem - to determining the proper criteria by which they should be judged. For example, the question has been raised as to whether Sarshār or Nazīr Aḥmad was "the first novelist" in Urdu. The very posing of a question in these terms is misleading, for it tends all too easily to the approach which first of all determines (usually on the basis of a consideration of European literature) what constitutes a novel, and then proceeds to examine such writers as Sarshār and Nazīr Aḥmad to see how far they have observed all the rules of novel-writing - rather as if Sarshār and Nazīr Aḥmad had made a thorough study of European literature, had formed a clear theory of the distinctive qualities of the novel, and then sat down to produce works in Urdu in which all these distinctive qualities should be present. In point of fact, of course, nothing like this happened. Nazīr Aḥmad, whose first work of fiction pre-dates Sarshār's by more than ten years, wrote at first for the edification and amusement of his own children and was only later persuaded that improving stories such as he had written for them would also be of interest to the general public; but all of his tales were intended to point a clear moral, and were designed and written for that sole purpose. He never had any pretensions

to be a novelist, and to judge him as though he had is both unjust and misleading. With Sarshār the position is indeed a little different, because he did claim to be writing works on the lines of the European novel. Even so it is important to bear in mind that 'novel' to him evidently did not mean quite what it does to the sophisticated twentieth-century literary critic. We know that he was well acquainted with Don Quixote (though probably only with an incomplete version of it); but he seems to have viewed it simply as an uproariously funny tale. Apart from that there are only a few European works to which he directly refers - "the novel of Pickwick, the novel [sic] of Walter [?Scott], and Monte Cristo, which are dearer to the English than life itself." In addition he seems to have known the work of such sensational writers as G.W.M. Reynolds. His conception of the novel was therefore a very restricted one. However, even this is not the essential point, for no serious student of literature can confine himself in assessing a writer's work to the writer's own view of it. He has the responsibility of studying it carefully and making his own assessment, and this often leads him to conclusions which do not entirely accord with those of its author. This is the case with Sarshār, who both in what he says and in what he fails to say gives an inadequate and misleading impression of his work. One cannot study the development of Urdu prose narrative fiction for long without being struck by the

closeness of Sarshār's link with the traditional dāstān, and to a lesser extent, with the fasāna (which is, in effect, only a special, sophisticated form of dāstān literature). Yet Sarshār's own statements minimise his debt to the fasāna, while his even greater debt to the dāstān is completely unacknowledged. His own aristocratic prejudices (and those of sophisticated literary society in general) are responsible for this, for the dāstān was too plebeian a form of literature to be classed as literature at all. (And, in fact, it is only in very recent years that literary critics have begun to rate it as worthy of serious attention.) But if Sarshār chooses to ignore this feature of his work, the critic and historian most certainly cannot.

The didactic character of Sarshār's works has also been criticised in a way which fails to take due account of the situation in which he wrote. Here again, Sarshār was writing in a tradition long established in Asian literature - and not only in Asian literature. In the England of his day too very few would have seen anything exceptionable in the view that good literature may (must, even) improve and instruct. The now widespread view - widespread among Urdu critics as well as in the West - that a book with a message is necessarily an artistically inferior book, dates from a time after most of Sarshār's works were written. In his day the didactic view of literature, supported as it was by all

the force of a long tradition, was very much more general, and this needs to be borne in mind when we assess his work.

Consciousness of the inadequacy of the approaches which I have criticised has led me to attempt in the present study to view Sarshār's works in their historical setting. Thus viewed, not only do they appear in proper perspective, within an unbroken tradition of Urdu prose-narrative; it also emerges how great was the new contribution to that tradition which they represent.

CHAPTER I

SARSHĀR'S LIFE

Ratan Nāth Sarshār, one of the first novelists of Urdu literature, was born in a Kashmīri Brahmin family, domiciled in Lucknow. These Kashmīri Brahmins are well-known for their close association with Muslims and their culture, and have produced many scholars of Persian and Urdu. Little is known about his life, and even the date of his birth is not certain. Chakbast, from whose article on Sarshār most other writers derive their information, writes

” . . . حضرت سرشار محفول نے حدیقہ نثر اردو
میں نئی روشیں لگائیں اور جنہلی جادو بیانی کا شہرہ
آج ہندوستان بھر میں پھیل گیا اور وہی ہے
ایسے باآمال کہا زندگی کے حالات کا پتہ چلانا ہمارے لئے
دشواری ہے دریا فتنے کے پر سال ولادت نہ معلوم ہو سکتا۔“

"Sarshār opened up new paths in the garden of Urdu prose and the enchantment of his style is famed throughout India. But alas for our heedlessness! It is difficult to discover the history of his life, and enquiry has failed to reveal even the year of his birth." 1

(In this chapter Chakbast's account has been followed except when otherwise stated). Chakbast estimates that he was born in Lucknow towards the end of the reign of one of the last rulers of Avadh, Muḥammad 'Alī Shāh (1837-42).²

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1. Mazāmīn-i-Chakbast, Lahore, n.d., p.20.
 2. However this is inconsistent with Chakbast's own later statement that Sarshār died in 1902 "at the age of 55 or 56". This would give 1846 or 1847 as the date of his birth, and this is the date which Rām Bābū Saksena gives, (History of Urdu Literature, Allahabad, 1927, p.325.

His father died when he was only four years old. Even as a child he was a very bright and intelligent boy. His family lived in the neighbourhood of good Muslim families and he was thus enabled to observe Muslim customs and to learn Urdu in its purest form from the women of the neighbourhood. Like many Kashmiri Brahmins of his time he was taught Arabic and Persian, but at that period English education was also gaining ground in his community, and after leaving school he went to Canning College which had been established by the British in 1864; but he left without taking a degree and got employment in Kherī (a district near Lucknow) as a school teacher. It was during this period that he began his literary activity, contributing articles to various newspapers and magazines. The names of some of these are known; they include Marāsala i Kashmīr, a monthly paper for Kashmiris domiciled outside Kashmir, Mirat ul Hind, Riyāz ul Akhbār and, most famous of all, Avadh Punch. These articles are not now traceable, but from the way he writes one infers that Chakbast had read them, and he tells us that they already show Sarshār's characteristic liveliness. He notes that the prevalence of Persian was still such at this time that Sarshār's first two articles for Marāsala i Kashmīr were written in that language, and that the Urdu articles are in the ornate style of Rajab 'Alī Beg Sarūr.¹

1. See Chapter IV below.

In this period Sarshār studied books in English,¹ and wrote a number of articles on educational and social themes, some of which were contributed to an Urdu periodical, Akhbār i Sarishta i T'alīm, published by the Department of Public Instruction. These attracted the attention of the Director of Public Instruction who wrote in one of his annual reports that Sarshār's translations were the best of any he had seen in the whole province.²

In 1879³ he published a book called Shams-uz-zuhā, a collection of essays on popular science based on English works.⁴ This book was remarkable especially for its rendering into Urdu of many scientific terms. A year earlier he had been offered, and had accepted, the editorship of Avadh Akhbār.⁵ Both Avadh Punch and Avadh Akhbār were published from Lucknow; in both papers articles on literary, political and social subjects were published, and in this sense the two magazines were rivals. According to Ram Babū Saksena, Munshī Newal Kishor - the publisher of Avadh Akhbār - wanted a capable man who could reply to Avadh Punch, which was publishing a series of attacks on Avadh Akhbār, and Sarshā

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1. So he tells us in his preface to Khudāī Faujdār; and this is implied also in his preface to Shams uz Zuhā, and in his reply to a critic published in the issue of Avadh Akhbār d. 30th August 1879. These references will be discussed more fully below.
 2. According to Chakbast. However, I have read the Annual Reports from the year of their first issue (1844) to 1880 and have failed to find any reference to Sarshār. Files of the Akhbār i Sarishta i T'alīm are not available here.
 3. Not 1878, as Chakbast says.
 4. Not a translation from an English work, as Chakbast says. He had evidently not read Shams uz Zuhā, for the point is made quite clear in the preface to the book.
 5. His first editorial appeared on 8th August 1878.

was introduced to him with this in view. In spite of his friendship with Munshī Sajjād Husain, the editor of Avadh Punch, Sarshār accepted the offer and became editor of Avadh Akhbār.¹ A series of articles in humorous style on such themes as the Muharram celebrations in Lucknow were especially popular, and Sarshār conceived the idea of linking these together in the form of a serial story. In this way his greatest work Fasāna i Azād came into being. It ran as a supplement to Avadh Akhbār from December 1878 to December 1879, and the first volume was published in book form in 1880.² A second, third and fourth volume followed in due course. This represents an enormous output, and a reading of his work amply confirms the truth of Sarshār's own admission that he never bothered to revise what he wrote.³

The success of Fāsāna-i-Azād is legendary in the history of Urdu literature; it was read and enjoyed by every section of society. Its great success gave rise to jealousy and bitterness and to the famous controversy initiated by the bitter attacks on it in Avadh Punch. Sarshār replied in a series of articles and the controversy lasted for a long time.

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1. Saksena, op.cit., p.325. However, I have found nothing in the files of Avadh Akhbār of this period to suggest that it was engaged in controversy with Avadh Punch.
 2. According to Chakbast; but this point is discussed in Ch.V.
 3. cf. Avadh Akhbār, issue dated 13th December 1879.

During his editorship of Avadh Akhbār Sarshār wrote many articles on political, social and literary subjects.¹ In 1887 he published a translation of Donald Mackenzie Wallace's History of Russia, and a re-written version of an earlier novel, now entitled Jām i Sarshār.² ^a Two years later he translated Lord Dufferin's "Letters from High Latitudes".³ In 1890 his novel Sair i Kuhsār appeared, followed some time before 1893 by Kāminī. "About 1893" (Saksena) he started a series of short novels under the general title of Khum Kadā-i-Sarshār. Included in this series were Kurum dhum, Bichrī Dulhan, Tūfān i Betamīzī, Pī Kahān, Hushshō and Rangīle Siyār.⁴ Some time during this period he translated a political pamphlet written by Dr. Hunter, a history of Egypt entitled Shākh-i-Nabāt and a slightly abridged version of the Arabian Nights.⁵ In 1894

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1. From this point up to the date of Sarshār's going to Hyderabad Chakbast's information is fragmentary, and sometimes inaccurate. Details are supplied mainly from a study of Sarshār's own works.
 2. The first version of this book was called Fasāna i Jadīd and began to appear serially in Avadh Akhbār in 1880. 1880
 3. Chakbast and Ram Babū Saksena have written that Sarshār translated "Letters from High Latitudes" into Urdu and even the title page of the translation states that this is a translation into Urdu: but in fact the text is in Persian.
 4. I have been unable to trace this book. It is quite possible that it is merely a separately printed extract from the first volume of Fasāna i Āzād. The two chapters occupying pp.18-25 form a connected whole, and the first is headed Range Sayār (not Rangīle Sayār, which is an unlikely title in any case. Range Sayār ('dyed jackal') is a common idiom for a man who is not all that he appears to be.
 5. Sarshār speaks of these translations in his preface to Khudāī Faujdār. I have however been unable to find either of the two titles first named; nor have I found any other reference to them.

came Khudāī Faujdār, an adaptation and free translation of Don Quixote.

I have not been able to discover at what point in his literary career he gave up the editorship of Avadh Akhbār,¹ but we know that after doing so he became a translator in the Allahabad High Court, a post which he failed to keep because he could not accustom himself to the discipline and regularity which it required of him.² While the publication of his series "Khum Kada-i-Sarshār" was still in progress he had occasion to visit Hyderabad, Deccan and such was his welcome that he decided to remain there.³ He has left his own account of this event in an article which was published in the paper "Kashmīr Prakāsh" in March, 1899.

”چار برس کا زمانہ ہوا کہ میں کانگریس کا ممبر ہو کر
مدراںس گیا تھا وہاں سے بخت رسا عیدرآباد
دکن لائے۔ یہاں کے بہنو اور سلطان امراء اور
پبلک نے میری بڑی خاطرگی
میرا راجہ شہنشاہ بہادر وزیر فوج آصفی
نے جو وزیر اور مددگار تھا مجھے بھی رہ چکے ہیں
بلایا اور دوسو کا نوکر رکھ لیا اور شعر و سخن
اور نثر کی اصلاح لینے لے“

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1. Complete files of Avadh Akhbār are not available here. For this reason I have also been unable to verify Saksena's statement (p.326) that Sarshār also took part in controversies with Hālī and 'Syed Muhammad Murtiza, Bayan and Yazdani of Meerut, the editor of Tuti-i-Hind.'
 2. Saksena, op.cit., p.326.
 3. From this point Chakbast is again the source.

"About four years ago I went to Madras as a member of congress (4) and from there my good fortune brought me to Hyderabad, Deccan. Prominent Hindus and Muslims welcomed me enthusiastically as did the public at large. Maharāja Kishan Parshād (5), the Nizam's Minister for the Army, and a former ... Prime Minister appointed me at a salary of Rs.200 a month to correct his poems and prose."

He goes on to say that the Nizam was already acquainted with him, that he (the Nizam) liked both Sair i Kuhsār and Jam i Sarshār and told him that he had already read the latter and had a copy in his library. The extract quoted by Chakbast ends with a statement that a new novel, Gor i Gharībān "will be published within a fortnight", but nothing is known of any such novel.

He stayed in Hyderabad as Mahārājā Kishan Parshād's teacher in poetry, and at the same time brought out a literary journal called Dabdaba-i-Āsafīa; a novel, Chanchal Nār, was begun in this magazine in serial form but was never finished.

Besides being a novelist and a translator Sarshār was also something of a poet. His theme in poetry is love, but he has written on other subjects as well.

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1. It seems almost certain that the Indian National Congress is here referred to. The Madras session in fact took place in 1894, but the discrepancy may be explained either by Sarshār's own inaccurate recollection or by the possibility that the article, though not published until March 1899, may have been written earlier, before the end of 1898.
 2. He was a poet of some importance but is particularly famous as a patron of poets and literary figures, and for his love of Urdu literature.

To quieten the outcry of orthodox opposition which was raised on the return from England of a Kashmiri pandit named Bishan Narāyan Dhar, he wrote a poem called Tuhfa i Sarshār, which shows his ardent support of modern ideas.

Sarshār, having once settled in Hyderabad, remained there for the rest of his life. However, he was not destined to live long. He had always had a great weakness for drink, and in his last days he started drinking to excess, as a result of which he lost the support of Mahārāja Kishan Parshād.² His end was hastened by illness, and on the 21st January 1903, at the age of 55 or 56, he died.

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1. A Kashmiri Brahmin, and a writer of some importance. One of the first Kashmiri Brahmins who went to Europe.
 2. According to Saksena, op.cit., p.327.

CHAPTER IITHE LUCKNOW BACKGROUND

Sarshār spent the greater part of his life in and around Lucknow, and one or other aspect of life in Lucknow forms the theme of all his major writings. An understanding of the history of Lucknow and of Avadh, the state of which Lucknow was the capital, from the time when during the 18th century it became the major centre of Mughal culture in Northern India is therefore of great importance for an assessment of the significance of Sarshār's work.

The state of Avadh was the product of the disintegration of the Mughal Empire which began in the latter half of Aurangzeb's reign (1658-1707) and proceeded rapidly after his death. By the 1730's the great provinces of the Empire had all become virtually independent under hereditary dynasties. Their rulers owed nominal allegiance to the Emperor in Delhi and derived their constitutional authority from him, but in fact, they were free to act as they pleased both within their own dominions and in their relations with other powers within the Empire and beyond its borders.

The Avadh dynasty was founded by Sa'ādat Khān, Burhān ul Mulk who had come to India from Persia and was appointed Governor of Avadh in 1720. Although most of his

energies were employed in building up his strength in his own province, he had ambitions in imperial politics as well. He was one of the most important leaders on the Indian side in 1739 when the Persian king Nādir Shāh invaded the country, and his quarrels with his rivals contributed materially to the crushing defeat which Nadir inflicted and to his own subsequent death a few weeks later. He was succeeded by his son-in-law Safdar Jang who, like Sa'ādat Khān, came to exercise an important influence at the imperial capital, where he held the office of Wazir for some years until 1753 when the Emperor dismissed him and ordered him to return to his province. He attempted to resist the Emperor's order by force and there was civil war in Delhi for eight months, in which he was ultimately defeated. However, he continued as governor of Avadh until 1754 when he died and was succeeded by his son Shujā'-ud-daula. For some years the new ruler was in no position to influence the course of imperial affairs as his predecessors had done, but like them he built up the strength of Avadh with a view to playing a part beyond his own dominions when circumstances should make this possible. His most ambitious enterprise was to lead an alliance with the Emperor and Mīr Qāsim, a deposed governor of Bengal, to establish himself as the dominant power in the eastern half of the North Indian plain. This enterprise brought him into direct collision with the British, already at this time

the de facto rulers of Bengal, whose forces defeated him at the Battle of Baksar in 1764. The subsequent treaty of 1765 made Avadh in effect, a client state of the British, and in the succeeding reigns the British increased their hold until the process reached its logical culmination in 1856 when Avadh was annexed to British territory.

However, for the period of nearly a century between the battle of Baksar and the annexation, Avadh enjoyed a measure of prosperity and security, and these conditions exerted a major influence on the course of development of Urdu literature, and indeed of the whole cultural life which had grown up in the period when the Mughal Empire was strong. Delhi, the imperial capital, had been the great centre of Urdu and of Mughal culture up to the middle of 18th century, but from that time the increasing anarchy at the capital drove more and more of its poets and scholars to seek refuge in the comparatively stable conditions in Avadh. This contrast between the security in Avadh and the ever-present insecurity of Delhi continued until after the turn of the century when in 1803 the British established themselves permanently in Delhi as the real power controlling the Emperor. Meanwhile for many years Delhi was the battle-ground of rival aspirants for power, backed on the one hand by the Marathas and on the other by the Afghan king Ahmad Shāh Abdālī. This conflict reached its climax with the battle of Panipat in 1761 when

the full forces of the Marathas and the Afghans met head on, and the Marathas were so decisively defeated that for some years they disappeared as a significant force in North Indian politics. However, the Afghans also, faced with internal problems in Afghanistan and with the increasingly effective struggle of the Sikhs against their domination of the Panjāb soon disappeared from the Indian scene, and by 1771 the Marathas had established themselves as the controllers of the Empire, a position which they retained until they were in turn displaced by the British in 1803.

By the last decades of the 18th century the Avadh capital had completely eclipsed Delhi; and the rulers of Avadh had consciously striven to achieve this result. It seems that they aspired in their own dominions to restore the kind of conditions which had once prevailed in the Empire as a whole. One important aspect of their policies was the maintenance of harmony between Muslims and Hindus for which Akbar had laid the basis. It is worth noting in passing that good relations between the two communities were so firmly established there that they continued unbroken even through the communal riots of 1946-7. Another important tradition was generous patronage of scholarship and the arts, and by the end of the century they had attracted to Avadh every Urdu poet of importance with the single exception of the mystic Mir Dard.

The Avadh rulers' sense of pride in their role as the inheritors of Mughal tradition formed the basis of an Avadh patriotism, which continued throughout the 19th century. This sense of patriotic pride early became associated with Lucknow which Āsaf ud daula made his capital (in place of Faizābād) when he succeeded Shujā'ud daula as ruler of Avadh in 1775.

Yet both in the political and the cultural spheres his reign marks the beginning of the period of decadence in Avadh. In spite of the blow to Avadh ambitions in 1765, Shujā'ud daula had worked to husband the resources of the state and to conserve its strength as a potential force in Indian politics. But Āsaf ud daula at his accession had to sign a new and much more onerous treaty, under which his obligations to the British were substantially increased. Indeed the story is from this time onwards one of the continual extension of British power over Avadh, by territorial encroachment, military occupation, ever-increasing financial demands, and ever more open interference in the nominal ruler's exercise of his sovereignty. Āsaf ud daula was the first who seems in the face of this pressure, to have resigned all political ambitions and concentrated his attention on making his court and his new capital a splendid cultural centre whose glories should surpass those of his predecessors. 'Abdul

Halīm Sharar in his famous account of old Lucknow writes

شجاع الدولہ جو روپیہ فوج اور جنگی تیاریوں
 میں صرف کرنے سے آگے آگے آگے آگے
 نے اپنی عیش طلبی کے ذوق اور شہری
 آسائش اور خوشحالی میں صرف کرنا
 شروع کر دیا اور پندرہ روز کے اندر
 ساری دنیا کی دعوت و دعوت عام اپنے
 یہاں جمع کر لی۔ ان کا ہوا صد بس
 یہی تھا کہ نظام حیدر آباد سونا
 یا ٹیپو سلطان کی دربار کا کرو
 فر اور کسی کی شہرت و شہرت
 میرے دربار سے زیادہ نہ ہو
 گئے۔

"The money which Shujā'ud daula had spent on his army and on military preparations, Āsaf ud daula began to spend in satisfying his sensual tastes, adorning his capital and enriching its citizens.... His whole ambition was to ensure that neither the Nizam of

Hyderabad nor Tipū Sultān nor any other court should outshine his own in majesty and grandeur." 1

His prodigal expenditure in pursuit of these aims made him a legendary figure in the history of Avadh. The popular saying

”جگو نہ دے سولا اسکو دے آصف الدولہ“

"To whom God gives nothing Āsaf ud daula gives" retained its currency well into the present century, and testifies to the impression he made on the people of his capital. One may regard Āsaf ud daula's efforts as motivated by a desire to blind himself to his political impotence by surrounding himself with the atmosphere appropriate to a great and powerful ruler, and this persistent self-deception continues strongly in evidence through the reigns of all except his immediate successor.

In this atmosphere Lucknow was no longer content to maintain the old standards associated with Delhi; it proposed to make innovations and thus to improve upon them; and these innovations are perhaps especially evident in the field of Urdu poetry. It is significant that the emigrants from Delhi reacted very unfavourably to Lucknow's new claims of superiority, and this reaction is common both to those who came direct from Delhi and to those who had left

1. 'Abdul Halīm Sharar, Mashriqī Tamaddun Kā Ākhiri Namūna, Lucknow edition, n.d. [1958?] p.35.

Delhi years earlier and settled in Faizābād in a period before Avadh's sense of superiority had become strongly developed. Most prominent in this latter category is the poet Mir Hasan. He had left Delhi with his father Mir Zahik during the days when Safdar Jang was governor of Avadh and settled in Faizābād. He came to Lucknow only after Āsaf ud daula's accession, and in one of his masnavis, Gulzār-i-Iram, he writes scathingly of the new capital, contrasting it most unfavourably with the old:

جب آیا میں دیار لکنؤ میں
 نہ دیکھا کچھ میرا برکتوں میں
 بہت ہیں تر اہل اللہ اس جا
 دلے حالہ جو بد ہو تو کٹر یں کیا
 زبیں یہ ملک ہے پھر یہ بتا
 ہمیں او پچا ہمیں نیچا ہے رستا
 کسی کا آسماں پر گھر ہوا میں
 کسی کا جھونپڑا تخت الثریا میں
 نہیں یہ لکنؤ یہ ہے زمانہ
 زمانے پر عیبت رکھا بہانہ
 عجیب ہے یاں رسم و رواج لکنؤ
 کچھ پستی ہے اور کچھ بلندی

"When I came into the land of Lucknow I found nothing in its charms to appeal to me. There are many good people there, but if the place itself is bad what can they do? It is a city built in the wilderness; its ways are uneven and full of ups and downs. One has a house that towers to the sky while another lives in a hut in the lowest depths. [They say:] "It is not Lucknow's fault; it is the age in which we live". But this is to blame the age unfairly. Men's ties with one another are all befouled; one is exalted to the heights, another sunk in degradation." 1

The last lines make it clear that the reference to the "wilderness" and the "uneven ways" are metaphorical rather than literal.

Mīr Hasan died in 1785, the tenth year of Āsaf ud daula's reign. His great contemporary Mīr had emigrated from Delhi much later than most of his fellow poets, leaving for Lucknow on Āsaf ud daula's own invitation as late as 1782. He lived to be nearly ninety, and the last twenty-eight years of his life were spent in Lucknow. They are marked by an increasing distaste for the atmosphere which was developing there, as is shown by the verses against Lucknow which occur in his last dīvāns. Thus he writes in his fourth dīvān:

خراپہ دہلی کا دہ چاند بہتر لکھنؤ سے تھا
 دہلیں میں کاش نہ جاتا نہ الیہ نہ آتا بہاں

1. Masnariyāt i Mīr Ḥasan, ed. 'Abdul Bārī Āsī, Lucknow, 1945, p.143.

The ruins of Delhi were ten times better than Lucknow. Would that I had died there, and not come to live in distress here. 1

And in the fifth:

آباد اجڑا لکھنؤ ہفتوں سے اب ہوا
شکل ہے اس خرابے میں آدمی بید و باش

This desolate Lucknow is now peopled with owls. It is hard for a man to live in its ruins. (Owls were birds of ill omen, and the word is also used in the sense of 'fools'). 2

And again in the fifth:

برسوں سے لکھنؤ میں اقامت ہے مجھ کو اب
یہاں ہے جہاں سے اچھا ہوں غم سفر ہوا

"I have lived for years in Lucknow, but I do not like its ways, and still my aim is to depart from here. 3

It is in the tradition of ghāzal that the reasons which lie behind this invective are left to the imagination of the reader. But our knowledge of Mīr's character and the traditional stories of the Lucknow period of his life recorded by Muhammad Husain Āzād in Āb i Hayāt enable us to form a more detailed picture. Two of these stories are of particular significance. The first relates how Mīr was

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1. Kulliyāt i Mīr, ed. 'Abdul Bārī Āsī, Lucknow, 1941, p. 505.
 2. Op.cit., p.570.
 3. Op.cit., p.566.

present at a mushā'ira where the poet Jur'at was reciting to the loud approval of his audience. Eager to win Mīr's praise, Jur'at approached him and pressed him to give his opinion. Mīr tried to answer evasively, but when Jur'at insisted he told him bluntly that he was no poet and that he should stick to his "kissing and slavering".¹

Mīr's own poetry is quite frank in its descriptions of sensual love, and one must conclude therefore that Mīr's objection is not that Jur'at writes about such things, but that he writes about them to the virtual exclusion of other themes. What Mīr objected to in Jur'at is carried to greater extremes in some of the later Lucknow poets.

The other story describes an occasion when some gentlemen visited Mīr and requested him to recite his verse to them. Mīr did not wish to do so, and when they persisted he grew angry and told them that in order to appreciate his verse it was necessary to know the language of "the steps of the Jāma Masjid" and that they did not know this language. He went on to tell them contemptuously that their way of appreciating poetry was to read books on poetics and then judge the poetry by applying the rules they had learned from these books.² The story is significant

1. Muhammad Husain Āzād, Āb i Hayāt, 14th impression, Lahore, n.d., p.270.

2. Āb i Hayāt, pp.237-8.

because the trend towards formalism is as marked a feature of Lucknow decadence as the trend towards merely sensual poetry; and already in Mīr's lifetime a situation was arising where verse was judged less by its content than by the degree of its conformity to a series of technical rules. Increasingly the Lucknow poets begin to stress "refinement" of language and mastery of technique, enjoining strict consistency in grammatical usage and meticulous adherence to the rules of prosody, and laying great emphasis upon proficiency in handling every form of verbal and rhetorical device. The difference between the old and the new styles is well illustrated by a comparison between two famous masnavīs - Mīr Hasan's Sīhr ul Bayān, written in 1782, and Dayā Shankar Nasīm's Gulzar i Nasīm, written in 1838. Preoccupation with verbal conceits and rhetorical figures is prominent in Nasīm's poem, and it says much for his skill that the freshness and interest of the narrative are not thereby lost. The outstanding exponent of this trend is Nāsikh, a poet who reached the height of his fame only after Mīr's death. Āzād relates a tradition that in his youth Nāsikh had approached Mīr with a request to accept him as shāgird, and that Mīr had refused; and this story may well be true.

These two trends - the sensual and the formalistic - continue strongly throughout the period of Avadh's

independent existence, and have come to be regarded as the hallmarks of a specifically "Lucknow school" of poetry as distinct from "the Delhi school". This assumption has been so universally made that one cannot discuss the further development of poetry in Lucknow without reference to it. This traditional contrast does contain a substantial element of truth, but neither in the eighteenth century (before the eclipse of Delhi by Avadh) nor in the first half of the nineteenth century, when Delhi re-emerges as a rival to Lucknow, is there so absolute a contrast between Lucknow decadence and Delhi vigour as the traditional view suggests.

The supposedly 'new' trends had already emerged in Delhi during the period of its decline. Āzād quotes a passage from Inshā's Darya i Latāfat (written in 1807) in which an old man laments the decline of poetic standards since the days of Saudā and Mīr, and remarks significantly:

اب آج کے شعرا کے چھوکرے ہیں وہی ہیں شاہد
ہیں اور دہلی میں بھی ایسی ہی چیزیں ہر جا پر

"Now the poets of Lucknow are no better than uncultured boys, and in Delhi too it is much the same."¹

Critics who quote Mīr's opinions of these trends during the Lucknow period of his life forget that he had been an

1. Ab i Hayāt, p.109.

equally exacting critic long before he ever settled there. The true position is well illustrated by the history of Rekhtī. This is a form of verse in which the poet is ostensibly a woman, describing her every-day experiences and especially her relationships with the other sex. Classical Urdu love poetry is the poetry of the male lover, and if the poets of Rekhtī had been seriously concerned to portray with imaginative sympathy the situations of love from the woman's point of view, this could have been a valuable addition to Urdu poetry. But in fact they are hardly concerned with this at all. The traditional criticism of Rekhtī has been that it is obscene, but modern taste would not find it markedly so. Its decadence lies not so much in its obscenity as in its preoccupation with purely formal matters. In the conditions of purdah society the women-folk developed an Urdu vocabulary and idiom distinct from that of the Urdu spoken by the men, and it is to demonstrate his mastery of this language that the Rekhtī poet writes. The Lucknow poet Jān Sāhib (b. 1817(?)) is regarded as the main exponent of Rekhtī, but Rekhtī in fact was invented and written by Rangīn (A.D. 1170-1251, i.e. A.D. 1756/7-1835/6) as Inshā has testified in his Daryā-i-Latāfat.¹

1. Tārīkh-i-Rekhtī ma' Dīvān i Jan Sahib, by Muhammad Mabin Naqvi, Allahabad, n.d., p.15.

Inshā himself also wrote Rekhtī; in fact he was often thought to have been the inventor of it. In any case it is to be noted that both Rangīn and Inshā were Delhi poets. Rangīn visited Lucknow, but returned to Delhi after a comparatively short stay, while Inshā came and settled in Lucknow but only after he had already made his name as a poet. Even Jān Sahib himself, who was educated in Lucknow and spent most of his life there, left it for a while to go to Delhi and Bhopal, and Muhammad Mubīn Naqvi's history of Rekhtī shows clearly that Rekhtī was an established fashion in Delhi just as it was in Lucknow.¹ Thus Rekhtī is by no means a specifically Lucknow phenomenon, and, in general, the contrast between Delhi and Lucknow is by no means an absolute one.

In 1803 a new period begins in Delhi, and the contrast between Delhi and Lucknow begins to assume different forms. Under a strong British administration it is in Delhi that conditions of stability are now established, while in Lucknow the increasing pressure of British demands and the increasing unwillingness of Avadh's rulers to concern themselves with good administration ultimately leads to widespread disorder which affects even the capital itself. Moreover Delhi now began to feel the impact of

1. op.cit., p.53.

Western science and culture in a way that Lucknow did not. The increasingly complete domination of Avadh by the British during the last sixty years of its independent existence was achieved by indirect means. The territory was not under British administration or direct British rule, and one result of this was that the new ideas which the British brought to the country made little impact there. This was not the case in Delhi where the presence of the British was now very much felt. Many of the British administrators were proficient in Persian and Urdu and had a genuine respect for Mughal cultural achievements; and the close contact of these men with the Mughal nobility and intelligentsia evoked reciprocal interest in British ideas.

In this period there arose in Delhi what is sometimes called the second school of Delhi poets, among whom the names of Momin, Zauq and Ghālīb are the most outstanding, and while in Lucknow the trends of decadence were continuing to develop, the Delhi poets were relatively free of it. Even so, the contrast must not be exaggerated. Patronage of poetry in both cities flowed mainly from the courts of their rulers, and while the two courts differed in many respects there were also points of resemblance between them. Avadh again had a vigorous and efficient ruler in Āsaf ud daula's successor Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān, but after his death in 1814 the attitudes and practices of Āsaf ud daula's

reign re-established themselves and the cultural atmosphere continued to deteriorate. The court became a centre of senseless extravagance and sensual enjoyment, and the decline in its actual power was accompanied by a process of self-deception which reached a new stage when in 1819 Ghāzi ud dīn Haidar on the encouragement of the British, declared himself King of Avadh, thus formally ending the nominal subordination to the authority of the Mughal Emperor in Delhi. In Delhi the Mughal Court had perhaps a more realistic view of its position and the last Mughal Emperors maintained something of the dignity of their predecessors, but politically they were no less effete than their Avadh counterparts. The poet most favoured by the Delhi court in this period was Zauq, and though his style is simple and straightforward there is little freshness or originality in him. Momin and Ghālib are greater poets, but formalist influences are evident in much of their work too. Verbal play and preoccupation with technical effects are a prominent feature in Momin's verse, and even in that of Ghālib. The fact that the whole area between Delhi and Lucknow was now at peace facilitated contact between the two cities. Ghālib was in correspondence with Nāsikh, and shows, at any rate in his earlier verse, the influence of Nāsikh's style.

Thus, on the one hand, decadent trends in Urdu

poetry, though more evident in Lucknow than in Delhi, were by no means Lucknow's exclusive preserve. On the other hand, even in Lucknow itself they were by no means the only trends in evidence. It is important to note that at every stage there were poets, equally prominent with their most famous contemporaries, whose work to a great extent continues to represent the vigorous, healthy tradition in Urdu poetry. Thus Inshā in his day is matched by Mushafi and Nāsikh in his by Ātish. The last period of independence, moreover, produced poets whose verse is amongst the best that Urdu can show. The masnavīs of Shauq are in no way inferior to those of Mīr and Mīr Hasan, while the marsiya poets, among whom pride of place goes to Anīs, developed a whole new genre of classical Urdu poetry, adding to its treasury a contribution which both in quantity and quality is of the first importance.

It only remains to add that the free expression of the themes of love is not so wholly decadent a thing as the traditional critics think. To the extent that it represents a rejection of traditional Muslim puritanism, there is a good deal that is perfectly healthy in it.

Urdu prose in this period was still little developed as a literary medium, for Persian was still widely regarded as the only fit medium for prose literature. Nevertheless Lucknow made its contribution here too. It is

mainly

to Lucknow that we owe the preservation of the old romances of Amīr Ḥamza (though these were not committed to writing until the latter half of the 19th century), and the year 1846 saw the publication of Rajab 'Alī Beg Sarūr's Fasāna i 'Ajāib short romance in the style of the Amīr Ḥamza cycle written in an ornate rhyming prose closely based upon Persian models. However, the prose narrative tradition is closely relevant to Sarshār's first major work and it will be appropriate to discuss it in more detail in that connection.

Lucknow people took a great pride in their city's contribution to Urdu literature, and if this pride was often indiscriminating, there were none the less solid grounds for it. In no other city was enthusiasm for the Urdu language and its literature more widely diffused among all classes of the population, and whatever their failures in other fields, in the field of culture and literature the rulers of Lucknow had achieved something which was to endure long after their rule had come to an end.

The period which we have been discussing comes to a sudden close in the 1850's. In 1856 the British annexed Avadh to their own territories and a year later came the so-called "Indian Mutiny" which at any rate in the Delhi-Lucknow area was much more than a mere military revolt. Delhi and Lucknow were the two major centres of the

uprising, and all classes of the population were profoundly affected by it. Mention has been made of a small class of Indians in Delhi who had been much impressed by British cultural and scientific attainments and had wished to see Western ideas introduced among their own people, but there was throughout the Urdu-speaking area as a whole an increasing hostility to the British. Contemporary British writers show a keen awareness of this hostility.¹

Popular hostility was reinforced by a growing resentment among the old aristocracy of the country. British policy in this period became more and more directed towards the extension of direct British control over the whole country, to the inevitable disadvantage of the old rulers. Allies amongst them were scarcely less harshly treated than enemies, so that a general feeling developed which Thompson and Garratt have expressed thus:

"... if the British both annexed when there had been the test of strength in war, as with Punjab, and when there had been nothing but decades of slavish submission, where did anyone stand?" 2

This feeling reached its climax in the period of Dalhousie's administration and contributed to the Mutiny of 1857.

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1. A number of statements by leading British officials are quoted by Percival Spear, India, Pakistan and the West, Oxford, 1949, pp.123-4. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Asbab i Baghavat i Hind gives a comprehensive account of the reasons for this general hostility.
 2. Thompson and Garratt, Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India, London, 1934, p.411.

"Decades of slavish submission" is not perhaps too harsh a phrase to describe the general attitude of the rulers of Avadh towards the British, despite the resentment of British pressures which some of them felt. Their courtiers and the people of Lucknow were perhaps more hostile to the British than their rulers, both because they sensed that the largesse which flowed from the Court would cease if full British control were imposed, and for less material reasons. Pride in Lucknow as the inheritor and developer of the traditions of Mughal society was deeply felt, and, as has been shown above, had a substantial basis in fact. The sense of solidarity with their rulers which the people felt is reflected in Sharar's account of Avadh previously quoted - and it should be noted that Sharar was writing long after the annexation¹ and that he was a staunch supporter of British rule. He writes of Āsaf ud daula,

نوٹ آگئے بیٹھتے عزت و محبت کے
 ساتھ ان کا نام لیتے اور اللہ تمام
 ذاتی جیوب فیاضی سے دامن میں چھپ
 کر نظروں سے غائب ہو کر اور عوام کو نواب
 کی صورت میں آیت عیش برکت فرما کر
 نہیں بلکہ بے نفس اور درویش صفت ولی نظر آتا
 ہر دو دھماکے دار آج تک صبح کو آئے کھلتے ہوش تغیر
 کے آتے ہیں "یا آف اولہ ولی"

1. The book was written, says Sharar, "something over fifty years" after the annexation.

"People never mentioned his name with anything but respect and love. His largesse concealed from people's eyes all his personal vices, and in the eyes of his subjects he appeared not as a sensual despot but as a selfless and saintly ruler. To this day Hindu shopkeepers as soon as they awake in the morning repeat the words "O saintly Āsaf ud daula"."

Sharar also records the common popular belief that Āsaf ud daula's successor Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān was tricked by the British into giving away half his kingdom to them. The story is that at the time of Āsaf ud daula's death he had long ago given up all hope of attaining to any position of influence in Avadh and had retired to Benares. There he was approached by a British representative and asked what he would give the British if they made him ruler of Avadh. Thinking that the question was a purely hypothetical one, he at once replied, "Half the kingdom", whereupon the British made him ruler and kept him to his promise. After relating this story Sharar remarks that English historians do not mention this incident but that in Lucknow this account was universally accepted as true; he goes on to say

یہ اور اسی قسم کے بیسیوں واقعات مشہور
ہیں جنکا ثبوت سوائے افواہی روایتوں کے اور
کچھ نہیں مل سکتا

"This and scores of similar incidents are related for which there is no evidence other than popular tradition."²

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1. Sharar, op.cit., p.39.
 2. Sharar, op.cit., pp.42-2.

The prevalence of such stories is clear evidence of the sympathy with their rulers, and the corresponding hostility to the British, which the people felt. This attitude of popular sympathy was maintained to the last, and even S.B.Smith, whose brief account is markedly unsympathetic to the Avadh dynasty, testifies that at the time of the annexation in 1856, "the ex-king's departure from Lucknow occasioned a spontaneous demonstration of grief amongst the inhabitants."¹

Hostility to the British was not confined to the capital. It was widely shared by the country people, as the events of 1857 amply proved. (As is well known, most of the sepoys of the so-called "Bengal Army", who played the leading part in the revolt of 1857, were men of Avadh peasant stock.) But long before 1857 such writers as Bishop Heber and Sleeman were testifying to this general feeling.

Thus Heber writes in his narrative (1824-25)

"I asked also if people thus oppressed desired, as I had been assured they did, to be placed under English Government? Captain Lockitt said that he had heard the same thing; but on his way this year to Lucknow, and conversing as his admirable knowledge of Hindoostanee enables him to do familiarly with the suwarrrs who accompanied him and who spoke out, like all the rest of their countrymen, on the weakness of the king and wickedness of the government, he fairly put the question to them, when the Jemautdar, joining his hands, said with fervency, "Miserable as we

1. S.B.Smith's introduction to The Private Life of an Eastern King, London, 1921. p.xxxix.

are, of all miseries keep us from that!" "Why so?" said Captain Lockett, "are not our people far better governed?" "Yes", was the answer, "but the name of Oude and the honour of our nation would be at an end." He was a soldier, however, and a Mussulman who spoke thus; a Hindu Rayat might have answered differently...." 1

Sleeman's account, however, provides evidence that the feelings expressed by the Muslim soldier were shared by the Hindu peasants. He gives a detailed account of "a long talk with the Brahman communities of two ... villages" who had returned to Avadh after a long period of settlement in Shājahānpūr (i.e. in territory under British rule). They praised the British administration highly, but when Sleeman asked them the direct question, "And where would you rather live - there, protected as the people are from violence, or here, exposed as you are to all manner of outrage and extortion?" they replied, "We would rather live here Sir, if we could, and we were glad to come back." They gave as their main reason their dislike of the British system of Justice. "Your courts of Justice (Adawluts) are the things we most dread, Sir; and we are glad to escape from them as soon as we can in spite of all the evils we are exposed to on our return to the place of our birth."²

The culmination of this general hostility to the

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1. Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India from Calcutta to Bombay, 1824-25, London, 1829, Vol.II, pp. 89-90.
 2. Sleeman; Journey through the Kingdom of Oude in 1849-50, London, 1858, Vol.II, pp.65-66.

British was reached with the Mutiny of 1857. Historians differ as to whether or not this was a spontaneous outburst. Some have expressed the view that the events at Meerut of May 9th merely precipitated the revolt for which active preparations throughout the country had long been going ahead. However that may be, there can be no doubt of the wide measure of support, ranging from passive sympathy to active assistance, which the revolt commanded in northern India, and particularly in Avadh, in spite of the fact that there was by no means complete harmony between the sepoy and their leaders on the one hand, and the old aristocracy (the nominal Emperor Bahādur Shāh, the representatives of the royal family of Avadh, etc.) on the other. Both in Delhi and Lucknow relations between these two elements were strained. In both centres the old aristocracy was lukewarm in its support, and gave leadership to the movement only because this position had virtually been forced upon them. The sepoy on the other hand knew that they themselves were the real power behind the revolt, and though they saw no alternative to the course which they took of ranging themselves behind the old ruling families, they were fully aware that their enthusiasm was not shared by the aristocracy, and this gave rise to constant friction.¹ In spite of this

1. For Delhi, cf. Spear, Twilight of the Mughuls, Cambridge, 1951, pp.195-214, and Thompson and Garratt, op.cit., p.433; for Lucknow, cf. Sharar, op.cit., pp.59-60.

disunity, such was the effectiveness of the revolt that the British had to relieve Lucknow three times,¹ and before the revolt was finally suppressed Avadh had to be practically reconquered.²

For the student of Urdu literature it is the reaction of the Muslim aristocracy and intelligentsia to the revolt of 1857 which is of primary importance. Their lukewarmness towards the revolt was in the main the result of a realisation of the great strength of British power and the futility of any attempt to overthrow it. Already before the revolt this realisation had led a section of them to study more deeply the sources of British strength, and this section had concluded that Indian regeneration could come about only if Indians themselves assimilated the achievements of the West and so equipped themselves to achieve in their own country what the British had achieved in theirs. They saw the British as their natural allies in this task, and a strong sense of loyalty to British rule naturally followed from this view. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān, who was later to become the most outstanding leader of the Muslim community in the Urdu-speaking area, is the most important representative of this trend, and his firm conviction of the correctness of his view had led him, at great personal risk, to assist the British actively during

1. cf. Thompson and Garratt, *op.cit.*, pp.456-57.

2. cf. P.E. Roberts, History of India, London 1952, p.375.

the revolt. This did not mean that Sir Sayyid and those who thought like him felt any jubilation at the crushing of the revolt. The drastic and largely indiscriminate measures taken by the British against the Muslims as a whole during the immediate aftermath was a deeply painful experience for all of them. It gave rise in the majority of Muslims in the Delhi-Lucknow area to a bitter resentment and deep, if impotent, hostility to the British and everything associated with them. Yet there can be no doubt that this decisive proof of British superior strength resulted in the long run in the strengthening of that trend of which Sir Sayyid was the main representative. The decisive British victory and the heavy blow which it had dealt to the old Muslim aristocracy led Sir Sayyid to stress all the more urgently how absolutely vital it was for the Muslims to identify themselves completely with the British in every way, since this was the only hope of their survival and regeneration. By the late 1860's, under the influence of his energetic example, there was coming into existence what came to be known as the Aligarh movement because its major object in its early days was the establishment of a College at Aligarh, mainly for Muslims, where Western education was to be imparted under a system more acceptable to the Muslim community than that which prevailed in the system provided directly by the British authorities. Sir Sayyid's

movement had to face formidable opposition, and the last three decades of the 19th century are dominated by the struggle between the "New Light" and the "Old Light" in which every educated Muslim felt himself obliged to define his position. Sarshār's literary life falls entirely within this period, and his writings are not exceptional in the attention which they devote to the long and bitter struggle between the old light and the new. The didactic and polemical elements are very prominent in all Urdu prose of the period. But because Sarshār's writings are so voluminous and his canvas so wide, these intellectual battles find particularly full expression in his works.

The advocates of the new light stressed all the benefits which in their view British rule had brought to India. They argued that British rule had put an end to the long period of anarchy and internal strife and had firmly established law and order throughout the country. They greeted with enthusiasm the introduction of such modern inventions as the telegraph, the railways, and the steamship which were helping to unify the country and to bring it into closer contact with the advanced civilization of Britain and Europe. But even more than these material advances they hailed the modern ideas and institutions of the West with which British rule was making them familiar. A realisation of the extent to which the old society had

degenerated with the decline and the fall of the Mughal Empire was not new. Already in the 18th century the great Urdu poets like Mīr and Saudā showed a bitter awareness of the collapse of the old world and the degeneracy of its ruling circles, and their work expressed a protest against this degeneracy, and a desire to see the re-establishment of ordered life and of the best values of the old society. But the advocates of the new light adopted a radically different position. They looked for salvation not in the restoration of the old values but in the adoption of new ones. And these ideas were indeed quite new. They had arisen in Britain with the great changes in the economic, social and political fields which had taken place and were still developing as a result of the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and the new scientific discoveries.

When the new rulers conquered the country politically they brought these ideas with them, and a movement arose in favour of their introduction into Indian life. The movement naturally started in Bengal, the area where British rule was first firmly established, and in the early 19th century it is associated above all with the name of Ram Mohan Roy.

But while it was in Bengal that it made most headway, comparable trends are also to be seen long before the middle of the century in the Urdu-speaking area. Of

these the most noteworthy was that which led to the establishment in 1827 of the Delhi College. There, through the medium of Urdu, the modern sciences and arts were taught alongside the traditional subjects of oriental learning, and the College quickly became a thriving intellectual centre.¹

In addition to the establishment of educational institutions, the establishment of Indian newspapers and journals was a means adopted to assist the propagation of the new ideas. The degree of freedom of the press allowed by the British authorities varied from time to time, but the tradition of public discussion and comment on the events of the day was established and helped forward the cause of the reformers.

One of the main aims of the advocates of the "new light", as it became to be called, was to secure the introduction of education in English, and most of them therefore felt great satisfaction when after Macaulay's celebrated Minute of 1835 the British authorities for the first time committed themselves unequivocally to this course.

The Aligarh movement is in certain respects quite clearly a continuation of the pre-1857 trend which we have

1. Some of the most prominent of Sir Sayyid's supporters were men who had studied at this College or come under its influence.

been describing, but the new conditions of the 'sixties and 'seventies in the Urdu-speaking area add to it a heavier political emphasis. While Sir Sayyid's attitude to Western ideas resembles that of those who worked to spread these ideas in the years before the Mutiny, he is above all concerned to impress upon his countrymen the folly of opposition to British rule, and to prove to them that absolute loyalty to the British is the first condition of their advancement. He did his utmost to introduce English education amongst them because he felt that this was the most effective way of cultivating a complete identity of outlook between them and their British rulers. He himself expressed these aims with characteristic bluntness when in 1882 he wrote of the Aligarh College:

"The real object of this College is to introduce the knowledge of European science and literature amongst the Muslims in general and amongst upper class Muslim families in particular, and so to produce a class Muslim in religion, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions and in intellect." 1

These words sum up his aim not only in relation to the College, but also in relation to every other aspect of his work. Apart from his educational work he was both a religious reformer and a reformer of social conventions and

1. Quoted by Muhsin ul Mulk in the introduction to Addresses and Speeches relating to the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh, Aligarh, 1898, p.2. The reader will recognise that the last words are almost identical with those of Macaulay's Minute.

customs. In both these spheres his main attention is directed towards justifying everything conducive to unity with the British and attacking everything which prevents such unity.

Sir Sayyid was a man of strong character and great energy. He gathered around him all the most talented of those who, although not necessarily sharing all his views, found themselves in general agreement with his aims, and he had the satisfaction before he died of seeing his trend of thought become the dominant one amongst the educated Muslims, particularly amongst those of the Urdu-speaking area. Sarshār's name too must be numbered among the enthusiastic propagandists of the new trend.

The new light naturally provoked strong opposition, launched in the first place by the old conservative trend already resentful of British encroachments upon their power long before 1857 and now further embittered by the defeat of the revolt. This trend does not however find much reflection in ~~the~~ 19th century Urdu literature. More important for our purposes is an opposition which, though it has points in common with the extreme conservative trend, has its own distinctive position too. It does not base itself upon the complete rejection of the new light, but it does attack forthrightly Aligarh's wholesale admiration for everything British, which it held up to

ridicule. It is not surprising in view of its past history that the main centre of this counter-trend was Lucknow, with its strong tradition of pride in itself as the upholder and the developer of Mughal values and culture. Anyone who lived and wrote in Lucknow, as Sarshār did, was bound to take this trend into account.

It would be misleading to present a picture of 19th century Muslim intellectual life in the area extending from Delhi to Lucknow as a clear-cut conflict between two trends mutually opposed on every point. A study of 19th century Urdu literature shows that while the general broad division is valid, almost every major writer has his own distinctive position in relation to the issues of his day. A full consideration of all of them would be beyond the scope of the present study, but some account of the more typical attitudes is relevant to an understanding of Sarshār. We therefore examine in turn three major writers of the period.

We may take Ghālīb (1797-1869) as one of the most important representatives of his time. In his letters and his poetry we find many clear indications of his reactions to all that was taking place around him.

He was born in an aristocratic family in Agra, but while he was still very young his father died and he grew up to lead a somewhat bohemian life. He was married young,

in 1810, and in about 1812 moved permanently to Delhi at a time when it had again become a great centre of learning and literature. During his early days there it was the centre of religious controversies between the orthodox and the religious reformers known as Wahhabis. Ghālīb's best friends were those who belonged to the orthodox group, but in certain respects his own ideas were nearer to those of the Wahhabis, and he differed from both groups in that he was quite free of all religious fanaticism, tolerant of others, and avowedly lax in his own religious observances.

Ghālīb's main source of income at this time was a share in a hereditary pension from the British authorities. A dispute arose over the amount of his rightful share, and in this connection he determined to take his case to the highest British authorities in Calcutta. He set out from Delhi in 1827, and, travelling via Lucknow and Banaras reached Calcutta in February 1828. He stayed there for a considerable time, ultimately arriving back in Delhi in November 1829. This visit to the capital city of the British dominions in India was an important experience in his life, and his writing shows that he was much impressed by what he saw there. However he had not won his case, and as he was a man who liked to live well, his financial difficulties grew all the time until in 1850 he succeeded in obtaining a regular stipend from the Mughal

Court, becoming in due course the ustād or poetic tutor of the Emperor Bahādur Shāh Zafar. By the time the Mutiny broke out he had acquired a large circle of friends both among the British and among the circles attached to the Mughal Emperor. This made the revolt and its aftermath a very painful experience to him. Ghālib was in Delhi when the sepoy from Meerut entered the city early in May, and he remained there throughout the siege, the retaking of the city by the British in September, and the reprisals in the weeks and months that followed, in which many innocent people suffered with the guilty. The letters which he wrote during this period give unmistakable evidence of what his feelings were. Thus he writes shortly after these events:

کوئی یہ نہ سمجھے کہ اپنی بد روئی اور تباہی سے غم میں
 بدتا ہوں۔ جو کچھ کچھ کچھلو ہے اسکا بیان تو معلوم۔
 گھر اس بات کی طرف اشارہ کرتا ہوں انگریز کی
 قوم میں سے جو ان روسیہ کا لوں سے ہاتھ تھیل
 دن کے انہیں سے کوئی میرا استاد تھا اور کوئی میرا شفیق اور کوئی
 میرا دوست اور کوئی میرا یار اور کوئی میرا شاگرد۔
 ہندوستان میں کچھ عزیز کچھ دوست کچھ شاگرد کچھ عشوق
 سو وہ سب کے سب فاطم میں تھیل گئے۔

"Do not think that I am grieving for my own downfall. I cannot describe what my afflictions are. But I can just point out to you that of the many English who have been killed by these black scoundrels some were my patrons, some my friends and some my pupils. Amongst the Indians some were my friends, some my pupils and some those whom I loved. Now all of them are no more." ;

1. An undated letter to Tufta, 'Ud i Hindī, Neval Kishor edn., Lucknow, 1941, pp.143-4.

On 5th December 1857 he writes:

ما صاحب تم جانتے ہو کہ یہ کیا معاملہ ہے اور کیا
واقعات ہوئے وہ ایک جنم تھا جس میں ہم تم باہم
دوست تھے اور طرح طرح سے ہم ہیں اور تم میں
معاذات تو میری محبت درپیش آئے۔ شہر ہے دیونا
جمع لگے اس زمانہ میں ایک بزرگ تھے اور بہادر
دلی دوست تھے۔ منشی بنی بخش اعظم نام
اور فقیر انشا تخلص نہ وہ زمانہ رہا نہ وہ اشخاص
نہ وہ معاملات نہ وہ اختلاف نہ وہ انسا حال بعد
چند مدت کے دوسرا جنم ہم کو ملا ہے۔ اگرچہ صورت اس جنم کی بعینہ نکلے

"My dear friends do you know what is the matter, and what has happened to us? There was a former life when we two were friends, and in that life we did many things together, we composed poems and collected volumes of poetry. In that life there was one who was our great friend; his name was Munshī Nabī Bakhsh and his takhallus [pen name] Haqīr; now everything has changed - the times, the people; our friendship and our joys. Time passed by, and another life has begun. In this life appearances are the same, but not one of the friends of that life is to be found." 1

Many subsequent letters express the distress he felt at the cruel punitive measures taken against the people of Delhi and at the unwarranted destruction of historic buildings and localities in the city long after the crushing of the revolt.

His attitudes during these critical years derived

1. Khutūt i Ghālib, ed. Ghulam Rasūl Mahr, Lahore, 2nd edn., n.d., p.144.

naturally from the outlook which he had formed long before the revolt took place. He was too clear-sighted a man to have any illusions about the vitality of the old order and his original and enquiring mind made him quick to sense and to welcome the advances associated with the growth of British power. His attitude is well illustrated by an incident which occurred some years before the Mutiny. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān had produced a new edition of Aīn-i-Akbarī, the great work on the administration of the Emperor Akbar (1556-1605), and in accordance with the custom of the time he approached Ghālīb to write one of the traditional encomiums with which the works of relatively unknown authors were introduced to the public. Ghālīb responded with a poem so unsuited to the purpose that Sir Sayyid decided not to make use of it. He argued that it was pointless to pore over the problem of so remote a past when so many new and important things were happening in the present:

گر ز آئین ما رود با ما سخن
چشم بکش و نذرین دیرین
ما میان افغانان را نذر
شیوه و انداز این را نذر

تاجہ آئیں! یہ یاد آوری ہے
 ہرگز کسی نے یاد آوری نہیں کی
 تاجہ انہوں نے انہوں نے انہوں نے
 دیکھو کتنی ہی رائے درآب
 سروس پروردن مبارک کارنیت
 خود بلوگان نیز جز لغتارنیت

If you want to speak of "Ain" [a reference to the title of the book and to the general meaning of the word, i.e. law and regulation of social life] look around you in this ancient world and see what the British have done; observe their ways; see the new law which they have introduced, the like of which the world has never seen....

See what a spell they have cast upon the water, so that its steam drives their ship through the sea....

every good thing in time is improved upon

....
 what good can come of worshipping the past?
 I ask you, is it not a waste of time? 1

In a letter of 1854 he writes that mushā'iras are held from time to time at the Mughal Court but that he goes to them only when he feels inclined, adding that in any case

یہ عہدیت خود چند روزہ ہے اسکو دوام کہاں؟

"This assembly [the Mughal Court] will itself last only a few more days. It cannot go on for ever."

Nevertheless he was deeply attached to many of the traditions of the old society, traditions which in spite of

1. Kulliyāt i Ghālib (Fārsī). pp.110-111.

its political insignificance, the Mughal Court in Delhi was at pains to keep alive. The last days of Mughal Delhi, like the last days of Lucknow, were marked by a genuine interest in cultural pursuits, the active patronage of poetry and learning, and stress upon harmony between Hindus and Muslims, and Ghālīb was not the man to undervalue these things. He died in 1869, before the conflict between the old and the new light had developed to the full, but when one looks back at 19th century Urdu literature his name stands out as the one great writer with adult experience of the Mutiny who is not strongly attached either to the old or to the new political order, but critical of both and at the same time appreciative of the good features of both. He was a firm believer in progress, but believed equally that everything good in the old order should be preserved and carried forward into the new.

All other writers are, on the whole, strongly biassed one way or the other - either in favour of the new order against the old, or of the old against the new.

Hālī (1837-1914) the younger contemporary and biographer of Ghālīb, exemplifies the former attitude. He believed not only that the British were now permanently established as the rulers of India, but that their rule would bring inestimable benefits to the country, benefits in which the Muslims too could share, provided that they

gave the government their wholehearted support and adopted the completely new outlook on life which the times demanded. He was thus an enthusiastic supporter of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān, with whose political, social and educational views he found himself in virtually complete accord. He was in fact amongst all the band of workers whom Sir Sayyid gathered around him, the one who did most through the medium of literature to rally support to the cause. His celebrated Musaddas,¹ which was the most popular poem of the time, was an attempt to make Muslims conscious of their decline and resolute to achieve a revival. The poem begins with a description of the political, social and moral state of the Muslims of India. It then paints a picture of pre-Islamic Arabia - a land of uncultured, illiterate and depraved people - and shows how these same people were completely transformed by their acceptance of the teachings of Islam. These same ignorant Arabs became the conquerors of the world, and distinguished themselves by their prowess in philosophy, science and the arts. Other nations too who accepted Islam did great things in the world. But now Muslims had forgotten the teachings of their religion and had again sunk to the level of an ignorant and backward people. The poem ends on an optimistic note and holds out

1. Published in 1879.

the hope of progress and of change for the better, provided that the Muslims change their outlook on life. This was in fact his main message to his community, to which he returns again and again in his writings. Thus in one of his poems^① he writes:

لیجئے تیرے آئیے مدت سے زمانے بدل
 اس سے اعلیٰ کو جو سو گم گیا لب کا نعل
 جو تختہ کی تجارت کے لئے اسلاف چھوڑ
 آئیے آئی بنیاد دل میں کہ تاسر نعل
 کام کے ہیں اب نہ دنیا میں پنر آئے نہ فن
 اور نہ کار آمد زمانے میں ہے کس آئے نعل
 ہیں نئی رسمیں نئے آئیں نئی ہے چال ڈھال
 اور نئے علم و پنر کا ہے جد ہر دیکھو عمل
 ہے نئی گویا زمین ہے آسمان گویا نیا
 کینچی گویا کہی ہے زوال دنیائے برل
 بڑھ رہے ہیں جو ہوا کا رخ بھیپتے
 مل رہے اپنی دو لاندھیوں کے آنسو پل

1. Quoted ^{by} Sayyid Ihtishām Husain, Tanqīd Aur 'Amalī Tanqīd, Delhi, 1952, p.123.

"The times have long since changed. The climate which suited our ancestors has long since changed. The old civilization which past generations built up and left behind them is shaken to its very foundations. Neither their art nor their skill is any longer of use in this world, nor that which was their strength and their power. Now there are new traditions, new institutions, a new way of life. Today on every side a new science and a new industry dominates the scene. It seems as though the very earth and sky are new. The world has cast its old slough; only those can prosper now who see which way the wind is blowing. They alone can reap the fruits of their own far-sightedness; but those who cling fast to the old ways are being ruined, and though they pass today in safety, tomorrow it will not be well with them.

They will have to change with the times or they will sink even lower in the world."

These same ideas are expressed in another poem, Falsafa i Taraqqī (The Philosophy of Progress).

Hālī wrote the Musaddas at Sir Sayyid's suggestion and when he read it for the first time he was so moved that he wrote to Hālī:

جب خدا پر چھپا کہ تو کیا لایا میں نے تو تھا نہ عالمی سے
مہ سے نکھو الایا ہوں -

"When after my death I am summoned before God and asked what deeds I did in the world I will tell Him that I got Hālī to write the Musaddas." 1

1. Khutūt i Sir Sayyid, Badaun, 1924, p.166.

The poem immediately became extremely popular. Its message of progress and hope aroused a great response.

Hālī was impressed by British rule because it gave a sense of security to the people. In his Hayāt-i-Jāved he wrote:

اسن اور آزادی جو برٹش حکومت کی بدولت پہلو
اس زمانے میں حاصل ہے وہ کسی عہد میں اور کسی دور میں
ہندوستان کو نصیب نہیں ہوئی

"The peace and freedom which we enjoy because of the British government was never found in India under any other rule." (p.257).

Elsewhere he wrote:

سر سید نے پر زور مذہبی دلائل سے ثابت کیا کہ انگریزی
حکومت میں رہ کر مسلمانوں کا مذہبی فرض ہے کہ سلطنت
کی اطاعت اور خیر خواہی اور وفاداری میں ثابت قدم
رہیں سلطنت کو کوئی شعل بیس اٹھے تو جان و مال سے اسکا ساتھ دیں

"By the force of argument Sir Sayyid proved that under British rule it is the duty of Muslims to remain faithful well-wishers of the British government, and if need be to give their lives and money to protect it." (p.260)

He approved of the British government because it compared favourably with the old regime, but unlike Sir Sayyid, he had no wish to mix with the British. Thus when he received the title of shams ul 'ulamā he wrote regretfully to his son,

"Now I shall have to meet British people."²

1. Cawnpore edn., 1901.

2. Quoted in Ihtisham Husain, op.cit., p.125.

Hālī was inspired by a great love for his country. After the Mutiny when the British government was firmly established and there was peace in the country he had great hopes for the future. Like Sir Sayyid and his other friends, he too thought that now at last the way to progress had been discovered. But as time passed he came to feel that these hopes were being belied. He became convinced that the new government had not been established for the good of India, and in his poems there are many couplets which express this feeling.

روسی بیوں یا تاتارسی ہنگوستان کے کیا
دیکھا ہے ہمیں برسوں لطف و نرم تھمارا

"What more can the Russians or Tatars do to us?
For years and years we have seen your "benevolence".¹

About the political policy of the British he wrote:

تذیب یہ ہستی تھی ہو ملک ہو مفتوح
وال پاؤں ہمارے کبھی تفرقہ ڈالو
اور عقل خلاف اسے تھی یہ مشورہ دیتی
یہ صرف سبب مجوں کے نہ ہے نہ لعالو
پر رائے نے فرمایا کہ جو ہستی ہے نہ بیز
مالو اسے اور عقل کا کہا بھی نہ ٹالو
کرنے کے ہیں ہو کام لے جاؤ وہ کہیں
جو بات سبب ہو اسے نہ ہے نہ لعالو

1. Divān-i-Hālī, Lahore, 1945, p.55.

Policy said: "If you want to keep your foothold in a conquered land, plant dissensions there." Wisdom said: "Do not even utter such a contemptible thought." Then Counsel spoke: "Accept what Policy tells you, but do not wholly disregard what Wisdom says. Do whatever you have to do, - but do not speak of such contemptible things."1

Hālī felt that because of the new foreign influence, India was losing its cultural and moral values.

ہمیں خالی غرر سے و شبہوں کی لوٹ بھی لیں
 غرر اس لوٹ سے جو لوٹ ہے علمی و اخلاقی

To be plundered by savages is bad enough, but beware of that robber who plunders your cultures and morals."2

As these ideas developed, a difference of opinion between Hālī and Sir Sayyid also arose. During the last days of his life Hālī came to feel that Aligarh was not producing a generation which would bring progress and benefit to the nation, but one of men more concerned to make a good career and get good government jobs than to do any good to the country. These changes in Hālī's views brought him close to the nationalist movement. When the Indian National Congress was founded in 1885 Hālī had agreed with Sir Sayyid's stand in urging Muslims not to associate themselves with it, but towards the end of his life his sympathies changed. Like the nationalists, he formed the opinion that the wealth of India was being drained out of

1. op.cit., p. 105

2. op.cit., p. 107

the country. Thus in 1906 he wrote:

اس قریب کا اثر ملک پر ضرور ہوگا اور رفتہ رفتہ کم و بیش ہوتا جاتا
 ہے۔ لوگوں کو اس لرنگ کا راستہ معلوم ہو گیا ہے جس راستے
 سے اس ملک کی دولت غیر ملکوں میں پھینچی جاتی ہے مگر اس
 راستے کا بند کرنا کوئی نئی نئی کھیل نہیں ہے۔۔۔۔۔
 اگر ایک صدی میں بھی ہندوستان غیر ملکوں کی مصنوعات
 کا مقابلہ کرنے قابل ہو جائے تو سمجھ لو اسکو بہت جلدی
 کا سراپا ہوئی۔

~~"Of all the movements aimed at serving the country none was more beneficial than the Swadeshi movement.~~

~~I think that the Swadeshi movement brings benefit both the Hindus and Muslims.~~

This movement will definitely have an effect on the country, as it is doing even now; now people have discovered the tunnel through which the wealth of the country is being drained away, but to block it up will not be an easy matter; even if it takes a hundred years to make India able to compete with foreign goods, we must think that we have progressed very rapidly." 1

1. Maqālāt i Hālī, Delhi, 1936, pp.309-10.

If Hālī reached these conclusions late in life, there was another school of writers who had been critical of the British from a much earlier date. These writers were all associated with Avadh Punch, the Lucknow literary magazine founded in 1877 which gathered around it all those who could not share Sir Sayyid's enthusiasm for British rule and for all the ideas and institutions of the West, and who did not believe that the solution of India's problems lay along the path which Sir Sayyid indicated. Akbar (1846-1921) is the most important representative of this school of thought.

He was born in a middle-class family and received his education in madrasas and government schools. He was trained as a lawyer and started a career in government service where he obtained an appointment as naib tahsildar. In due course he rose to the rank of Judge. What he saw in the service of the government led him to the conclusion that British rule was far from wholly beneficial to India.

To him the whole atmosphere of British domination was oppressive and he bitterly rejected the claims made for British rule by Sir Sayyid and his followers:

انس پتے ہوئے بھی ڈرتا ہوں
 یہ نہیں جیسا کہ آتا ہے ہوں
 شیخ جی خدا سے ڈرتے ہیں
 میں تو انگریز ہی سے ڈرتا ہوں

"I am afraid even to breathe in case they might think that I am sighing. Let the sheikh sahib fear God: for my part I am only afraid of the British." 1

ہم سب بطبع و خیر خواہ العلیین
یورپ کیلئے فقط ایک گودا م ہے ہند

"We all are obedient flatterers of the British: for Europe, India is nothing but their warehouse." 2

He considered that the English saw in modern education just another way of keeping Indians subject to British rule.

ٹوپ کھسکی تو پرفیسر پہنچے جب بولا ہاں تو رندا ہے

"The gun is moved away and the professor comes on the scene. After the adze is finished with, it is the turn of plane." 3

His attacks upon the Aligarh movement follow logically from his attitude towards the British. He attacks it for creating in the minds of young Indians a servile admiration for everything British and a contempt for their own national traditions and culture. Moreover, in spite of Sir Sayyid's claims that Western education would make possible a great future for Indian Muslims, Akbar asserts that in practice the education imparted at Aligarh is only sufficient to supply the British need for men to fill minor administrative posts.

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1. Quoted in Sayyid Ihtisham Husain, Tanqīd 'Aur Amalī Tanqīd, p.144.
 2. Kulliyat. Vol.II, p.224.
 3. op.cit., p.65.

چھوڑ لٹریچر اور اپنی ہیٹری کو بھول جا
 شیخ و مسجد سے تعلق ترک کرنا شروع کرنا
 چار دن کی زندگی بے کوفت سے یہاں فائدہ
 کما ڈال روٹی کھاری کر خوشی سے پھول جا

"Abandon your own literature; forget your own history; cut yourself off from the mosque and spend all your time in school. Life is short; what is the use of worrying? Eat your English bread, get a job as a clerk, and swell with pride." 1

جو بات بتائی جاتی ہے وہ یہاں فقط بازاری ہے
 جو عقل سکھائی جاتی ہے وہ یہاں فقط کوری ہے

"What do they teach? only enough for the mercenary purposes of life. What training do they give the mind? Only enough to fit it to serve the government." 2

یہاں ہیں اغیار کیا کار نمایاں کر لئے
 بی اے کیا لو کر ہوئے پینشن ملی اور مر گئے

"How can we hope to describe all our opponents' achievements in life? They passed their B.A. they got a job, they drew their pension and they died." 3

He is not opposed to modern education as such, but he wants it to be used to equip Indians with the necessary

1. op.cit., Vol.II, p.61.

2. Quoted in Sayyid Ihtisham Husain, Tanqīd Aur 'Amalī Tanqīd, p.145.

3. Kulliyat, Vol.II, p.64.

knowledge to make India a modern industrial country. He does not believe that the British would willingly allow this to take place, but urges Indians to acquire this knowledge even if the British attempt to prevent them.

ابن آيا نقل آيا زن سے -
سن ليا نام آگ پانی کا
بات انتی اور اسپد یہ طوبار
علم پورا سکھائیں اگر
تہ کریں شکر مہربانی کا

"The engine came and swiftly passed us by; all we could catch was something about fire and water - that is all. And yet there is all this fuss about the philanthropy of Europe. Let us see if they will teach us all their knowledge; if that happens we shall really have something to thank them for." 1

عزم کر تعلیم مغرب کا پندرے زور سے
لطف کیا لکھنے کو ٹرپہ زور سے زور سے
غیر ملکوں میں پندرے کو سکھائیں آگ
روکتے ہیں وہ اگر اپنے اثر سے زور سے

"Make up your minds to imitate the west in industry, not just in buying cars to drive about in. Acquire skills in foreign lands, bearing all hardships - even if they use all their influence to prevent you." 2

Akbar repeatedly insists that in their enthusiasm for modern ideas Indians must not lose their sense of national pride or abandon their own traditions, of which

1. Kulliyat. Jaunpūr ed. 1923. p.16.
2. op.cit., Vol.II, p.87.

he considers their traditional religion an important part. Provided that this danger is avoided, he sees no harm in the adoption of modern ideas or even in the copying of Western dress and manners, though he himself does not favour these.

تمام ہی بوٹ اور سوزہ رکھئے
 دل کو مشتاقی سے ڈی سوزا رکھئے
 ان باتوں پہ اعتراض نہ ہو گا کوئی
 پڑھئے جو نماز اور روزہ رکھئے

"By all means keep your English boots and socks. By all means woo your "Miss De Souza". No one will object to your doing so provided you do not forget your prayers and fasting"[Miss De Souza represents the typical modern anglicized Indian girl, and also, symbolically, western ideas and institutions]. 1

Akbar was distressed by the crude materialism of the typical Aligarh graduate who seemed to have no higher object in life than the attainment of personal comfort.

اعلیٰ مقصود چاہئے پیش نظر
 تیرا ہو تو لطف دانی تیری
 فریاد بیچارہ پر عمل کرتا تھا
 شیریں آئیے کہ ناشپاتی لپیے

"You must set a high ideal before you, even though you are seeking personal advancement. When Farhād dug through the mountain, did he do it for his beloved Shīrīn, or for a pear [i.e. some petty personal advantage]?" 2

1. op.cit., Vol.II, p.86.
 2. Jaunpūr ed. 1923, p.155.

Finally, but not least important, Akbar strongly opposed Sir Sayyid's conception of furthering Muslim interests by means of ^{complete identification} ~~an alliance~~ with the British. ^{+ opposition to the Hindus}

لٹرین ایوں ہندوؤں ہم ہیں کے ان سے بننے ہیں
 ہماری بھی دعا یہ ہے کہ لنگا جی کی برصغیر ہو
 گنہگار شیخی پالیسی سے ہم نہیں واقف
 اسی پر فہم کرتے ہیں کہ جو صاحب کی مرتجی ہو

"Why should we quarrel with the Hindus? We are both nourished on the fruits of the same soil. We too want the Hindus to flourish. What I do not understand is the policy of Shaikh Jī [Sir Sayyid] whose first and last word is "Whatever the sahib [i.e. the British] wishes."¹

It was amongst predominantly Muslim cultural circles that Sarshār spent his life, and it is with the battle between the old and the new light within these circles that almost all his work deals. But as a Hindu he was also aware of and interested in comparable movements in Hindu society, and though only in two of his novels (Kaminī and Bichrī Dulhan) is Hindu society his main theme, there are references throughout his writings to the trends and personalities associated with Hindu reform movements. These had naturally originated in Bengal, the part of India where the British impact was first felt most strongly, and where already by the beginning of the 19th

1. op.cit., Vol.II. 59.

century Ram Mohan Roy (1774-1883), influenced by Western ideas, was propagating a new conception of Hinduism. It was he and his associates who formed the Brahmo Samāj which campaigned not only against such traditional religious practices as the worship of idols but also against the social injustices of Hinduism as traditionally interpreted such as satī, child marriage and the ban on the re-marriage of widows.

The samāj did not confine itself to a negative attack upon these old practices, but actively fought for the emancipation of women, urging in particular their right to receive the same education as was given to men. After Ram Mohan Roy's death men such as Keshab Chandra Sen, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasāgar continued the work which he had begun.

A later movement which made a deeper impression in Northern India (especially in Punjab and U.P.) was that of Swāmi Dayānand (1824-1883) who founded the Ārya Samāj in 1877. In its religious aspect Dayānand's teachings had something in common with those of the Brahmo Samāj; for instance he too was opposed to idol worship and to the ban on widow re-marriage. But with him a purged and reformed Hinduism was very much a militant weapon of Hindu revivalism against Christianity and Islam and the tolerance of the Brahmo Samāj towards other religions is regarded

with disapproval.

One of the Arya Samāj's main efforts was directed towards the full incorporation of the untouchables within the Hindu community and the reconversion to Hinduism of those who had turned to other faiths.

Finally mention should be made of another trend much influenced by Hindu concepts which arose towards the end of the century. This was that of the Theosophists, founded outside India in 1875 by Madame Blavatsky and others. Perhaps its most important impact in India lay in the association of prominent Theosophists like Annie Besant with the movement for Home Rule.

This general survey of the historical background of Sarshār's life and work, in which an attempt has been made to give a brief account of the great changes taking place in the 19th century in the Urdu-speaking area, of the conflicting ideas to which these changes gave rise, and of the expression of these ideas in the Urdu literature of the period, is an essential prelude to the detailed study of Sarshār's works, to which the ensuing chapters will be devoted.

As will be seen, Sarshār's works are very much the product of an age of transition from the old to the new. As such they have all the defects which in such a period are generally to be expected but they also have all the

interest which attaches to the literature of an age of controversy, when almost every issue was debated and neither side could claim to have won the final victory in the battle against its opponents.

CHAPTER III

SARSHĀR'S EARLY WRITINGS

It is significant that all of Sarshār's earliest writings are directly concerned with themes of contemporary importance. Convinced, like so many of his contemporaries, that the reform of education was the key to the social change, many of his articles were written for publication in the Urdu periodical issued by the Department of Public Instruction. Unfortunately I have not been able to discover whether any file of this periodical is available and have thus been unable to ascertain how many articles of Sarshār's were published in it and what was their subject matter. However, Sarshār's first published book is available in the British Museum, and a study of this book enables one to form a fairly detailed picture of the character of his writing at this period of his life.

The book is entitled Shams uz zuhā ('The Bright Morning Sun') and was published by Munshi Naval Kishor in 1879,^① Sarshār writes in the introduction^②

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1. Although the book was not published until 1879 internal evidence suggests that it was written in 1875-6. In a passing reference on page 51 Sarshār speaks of the measures taken for famine relief during the Bengal famine of "a year to eighteen months ago." This must almost certainly refer to the famine of 1874. cf. The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. VII, Oxford, 1908, p.284.
 2. Page 3.

بڑی خرابی یہ ہے کہ ہماری زبان میں عمدہ
 عمدہ کتابیں صفت کبریت اور قلم رکھتی
 ہیں مگر محض لٹریچر میں ہی
 نہیں۔ ہر علم پر فرض ہے، فرض میں
 ہے اور سچ پوچھو تو اسی میں سعادت
 ہے۔ کہ عمدہ عمدہ کتب انگریزی
 سے اردو میں ترجمہ کر کے تاکہ علوم مغربی
 کے نور سے ہمارا اظہار ہر دل منور ہو
 لہذا انگریزی کے علمائے اجل فضلاء
 اعلیٰ لطائف لطیف اور مستند اور
 معتبر سے یہ تحفہ مخضرہ تیار کیا گیا
 اور اس کا نام شخص الکفء رکھا۔

"It is a sad thing that in our language really
 good books are as rare as the philosopher's
 stone, but praise be to God that in English
 there is no lack of them. Thus it is our
 duty - in fact, our prime duty - to translate
 into Urdu the choicest English books so that
 the dark chambers of our mind may be illumined
 by the radiance of the Western sciences.
 Accordingly I have prepared this unworthy
 offering from the fine English compositions -
 authoritative and reliable works - of
 illustrious scholars and accomplished writers;
 and I have named it 'The Bright Morning Sun'."

This ornate style recurs throughout the book, and it would seem that Sarshār had in mind an audience of adult readers accustomed to the traditional prose style.

Sarshār does not give any systematic account of his English sources, but from time to time in the course of the book, makes reference to them. As the English names are written only in the Urdu script it is not always possible to be certain of the correct forms, but he mentions Dr. Arnot, Robert Hall, Humboldt, Col. Watts, and a number of others whose names it is impossible to decipher.

The book is divided into four parts. The first begins with an account of the shape of the earth, of its movement, and of its revolution round the sun, the forces of gravity and repulsion, seas, lakes, tides, rivers,¹ rain, clouds, snow, dew, lightning and so on. The second is an account of the solar system and the third and fourth

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1. It is interesting to note that the chapter on rivers is followed by a full section on the River Ganges, about which he writes in terms of the highest praise. He quotes with great satisfaction the words of a Mr. Crawford, who had written that "the English owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the River Ganges, for it is thanks to this river that they have planted their victorious standard and have beat the drum of triumph over huge areas of fertile territory. Thanks to this river too, trade and commerce is increasing and prospering by leaps and bounds." Thus Sarshār expresses both his pious feelings as a Hindu and his enthusiasm for the British.

give some account of the natural sciences. The whole book occupies 184 pages.

The content of the introduction, as well as the style, supports the assumption that Sarshār was writing not a school text book but a work for adult readers. Thus, there is no reference to the inadequacy of existing school books, but a great deal of complaint about the intellectual backwardness and the lethargy of Indians. Sarshār reminds his readers of the days when India was famous for its culture and learning, giving a lead to the other countries of Europe and Asia, and then tells them bluntly that all this has changed, and that today Indians are the most backward people. They have no desire to learn and their only interests are in quail-fighting, opium-smoking and kite-flying. In contrast, the English have made great advances in every field. (This theme he returns to again and again). It is therefore of the first importance that Indians should learn from them.

In spite of this plain speaking Sarshār often indulges his readers' traditional tastes. Knowing their love of Persianised, flowery prose he often writes in this style. Thus on page 77 he writes:

میں شخص کو علمی باتوں کا شوق نہیں ہے
 وہ سفل ہے جس میں خوشبو نہیں ہے۔ مفرق
 ہے جس میں کج ادائیگی نہیں ہے۔ شورب
 ہے جس میں پارسائی نہیں ہے۔ چراغ ہے
 جس میں نور نہیں ہے۔

"The man who does not seek after knowledge is like a flower without its fragrance, a mistress without her coquetry, a woman without her chastity, a lamp without its light."

(In the original, the Urdu words translated here as 'seek after' and 'fragrance' rhyme together, as do also 'coquetry' and 'chastity'.)

and on page 126 :

ہاں بیہوش نا بیہوش کا البتہ دہاں گزر
 ہے ۔ ۔ ۔ بڑے بڑے ہو نخواستہ لہجہ دار
 اس حیرت میں بے شمار ہیں -

"But the inauspicious (نا بیہوش) monkey (بیہوش) lives there, and besides him innumerable hooded snakes that thirst for blood live in this desert."

In the same traditional style, there is a great deal of play upon words. The result is sometimes effective, as when he writes (p. 85)

سرد ملکوں کے رہنے والوں کے دل بھی سرد ہیں

"The men of cold countries are men of cold hearts."

But sometimes traditional taste alone would find it attractive, as when he writes (p.62) in the chapter on rainfall:

ہیں تو اسی رطوبت سے لہجہ تکم کو بھی برساتی
 نہ ہو جائے

"... lest the moisture of my subject matter infects the bay steed of my pen with the farcy [a horse-disease which usually breaks out in the rainy season]."

All the same the book also shows clearly all the promise that was to be fulfilled in his later works. He knows how to present his material in an attractive way. Thus on page 4, in the chapter on Gravity, he writes:

ایک دن کسی پر فنا اور دلکش باغ میں
خالد اور حامد بیٹھے تھے۔ چو طرفہ گالی
گالی گھٹا چھائی تھی۔ ٹھنڈی ٹھنڈی
ہوا کے جھوکے چل رہے تھے۔
پھولوں کی بھینسی بھینسی مہک دل
و دماغ کو لغارت اور قوت
بخشتی تھی کہ دفعۃً ایک تناور
درخت سے جو اس شعر کے بعد آتی تھا
شافی رہا رہا کہ کئی سید پر خمر کشیدہ
ایک آسمان پر پڑا

"One day Khālid and Hāmid were sitting in a spacious garden. The black rain-clouds covered the sky, and gusts of cool breeze were blowing. The sweet scent of the flowers was refreshing the mind and heart. All of a sudden from a great tree "whose branches spread in a hundred directions slapped the face of the moon." (1) a mango fell."

The book abounds in passages of this kind.

1. In the original passage this is a Persian verse.

There are many flashes of the same broad humour that was to make his later writings so popular, humour which is often combined with ridicule of the bigoted supporters of the old light. Thus after showing that the earth is round he writes (p.5):

ہم القدر سے چکے تھے کہ ایک خانقاہ
 ولا شتی قرولی باندھے ادنیٰ بنے
 سو مجھ کو منبر تاؤ دیتے ہوئے اکثرے
 غریب خانے پر تشریف لائے۔
 آئے ہی پیترا بدل کر سلام کیا اور
 یہ مضمون حرکت زمین کا پڑھ کر
 آگ ہو گئے اور بھاری طرف دیکھ
 کر فرمایا کہ آپ کرمستان ہو گئے۔
 غضب خدا کا آپ آفتاب کو سانس
 تھوڑ کر رہتے ہیں۔۔۔۔۔
 میں نے کہا صل علی عمچتوںوں کا
 تاڑ جانا کوئی محمد سیدی ایشاء اللہ
 دقیا نوسی میں آپ یڈ طولی رکھتے
 ہیں

"In olden days people used to think that the earth was flat but the scholars of today have conclusively proved by excellent arguments that the earth is round.

The reasoned arguments which the subtle scholars of Europe advance to prove that the earth is round are so logical as to be decisive, and it is beyond the power of any man to fault them. But God preserve us! there are still some men, who should be called the contemporaries of Noah and Decianus, who still stick to the old tune. Prove how you will that the earth is round, these stalwarts will not hear a word of it, and go obstinately along their own way."

At one point (p.12) he breaks off his account to write:

ادائل ہیں تو آپ سمجھتے تھے کہ زمین ایک سطح
 ستوی ہے مگر علمائے متاخرین نے عمدہ
 عمدہ دلیلوں سے اس بات کا یقین ثبات
 کر دیا کہ زمین مدور ہے۔ یورپ کے
 مفالقی اور دتالقی عالموں نے جو دلائل
 مغلیہ زمین کے مدور ہونے پر پیش کیے
 ہیں وہ من کل الوجوہ قاطع ہیں۔ ایسا مجال
 کوئی انپرا اعتراض کر سکتا لاهول ولاقولا
 ہاں بعض آدمی جتنا حضرت نوح اور
 رقیانوس کا ایم ٹھہر رہا ہے چاہے آنت
 پرانی ہی کبیر کے فقیر ہیں آپ جا ہی
 جھڑت ثابت کر دیں کہ زمین گول ہے۔
 وہ دُعا کے لیے ایک نہ مانیں گے
 اور اپنے ہی اڑھائی چاول گلے
 مائیں گے۔

I had written this far when in marched a Khān Sahib, twirling his moustaches, fully armēd, and with a fine dagger at his waist. He greeted me at once in military fashion. When he read the passage about the movement of the earth around the sun he was beside himself. He looked straight at me and said, "You have turned Christian! Have you no fear of God? You think the sun stands still!"

"God prosper you!" I said, "How quickly you take the point! You are the pride of the old light!"

In another passage he ridicules a learned Maulvi's ignorance of geography. He says that a Maulvi Sahib with a long beard once came to visit the school where he (Sarshār) was teaching. He saw the maps hanging on the walls and asked what they were. He was told that they were maps, and that all the famous cities, countries, seas and lakes were drawn there. When he heard this he got up and started eagerly studying the map of Asia, but when his glance fell on the Bahr i Murdār (Dead Sea) he came up to me smiling and said sarcastically, "What a wonderful map; my friend! What a wonderful education! If this is your school and this is the teaching, the student is finished!"

I asked him what was the matter, and he said that there were rude words written on the map; there was a lake on which "murdār" was written - "and if "murdār" is not a rude word I don't know what is!" ('Murdār' is indeed used as a word of abuse in Urdu, conveying something of the sense of 'carrion'.)

Many passages in the book are written in question

and answer form. In using this form Sarshār was continuing a long-standing tradition; for instance, many religious works were written in this catechism form. But whereas these old works are often dry and uninteresting, Sarshār's question and answer has all the liveliness of a natural dialogue.

It is worth noting that Sarshār wrote at a time when modern scientific vocabulary hardly existed in Urdu, and he was therefore constantly under the necessity of coining new words. His vast range of vocabulary enables him to cope with this task, but perhaps he is led by a desire to display his learning to use difficult Persian words where everyday Urdu ones would have been quite adequate to his purpose. A striking example occurs where he lists the colours of the rainbow, using Persian words throughout instead of simple Urdu ones.¹

But in spite of some defects, the book is very readable and successfully combines the imparting of useful knowledge with a lively and interesting style.

Shams uz Zuha is in itself a reliable guide to Sarshār's general outlook on the problems of his time; but we have in addition a substantial quantity of early writing which shows how this outlook was elaborated over a whole

1. p.102.

range of particular social and political problems. This comprises the numerous articles by his hand which appeared in the columns of Avadh Akhbār.

Sarshār was appointed editor of Avadh Akhbār on 8th August 1878, and on the same day wrote an editorial expressing the pleasure which this gave him and stating his views of what the responsibilities of an editor were. It is noteworthy that this is in the same ornate highly Persianised language as we met in Shams-uz-zuhā, though sentences of simple colloquial Urdu are interspersed here and there. He begins by lamenting the sad plight of India, and goes on to say that in the face of these conditions the main tasks of an editor are four. First and foremost he must serve his fellow-countrymen by bringing them "out of the depths of the wilderness of misfortune onto the highway of prosperity." Secondly, he must teach them to improve their ways.¹ Third, he must bring the views of its subjects to the notice of the government. And fourthly, he must "illuminate with the radiance of the sun of refinement the dark chambers of the heart of those who languish in the pitch darkness of unfathomed ignorance, begging for light."

His subsequent editorials show with what enthusiasm he threw himself into these tasks, and it is significant

1. He uses the word اخلاق, akhlāq, which covers both morals and manners.

that after making his formal debut in his most formal style he generally writes in a more simple and straightforward manner. It was common in those days for an editor to have to write a great deal of the material in his paper himself, and this was evidently Sarshār's position too, for in addition to his editorials there are numbers of unsigned articles in the columns of Avadh Akhbār which are evidently his work, for their style is indistinguishable from his. One such article appeared only two days after he took charge, on 10th August 1878, devoted to the evils of drinking. He was much preoccupied with this subject, and returned to it again and again throughout the period of his editorship (and indeed throughout his life). He often treats it in humorous sketches under the heading of zarāfat, and many of these were subsequently included in Fasāna-i-Azād. Two which were not so included appeared on 8th and 12th October 1878 respectively. The first reviewed various kinds of intoxication, including not only drink but also the smoking of hemp, opium and other intoxicants. In the second Sarshār suggested that legislation should be passed against drinking, hastening to add, however, that only Indian-brewed drink should be subject to such restriction. Imported "wilāyatī" wines should be exempted, for these are of fine quality, do little harm if taken in moderation, and indeed are sometimes even prescribed by doctors. An interesting item appears in the

issue of 15th October in the form of a letter signed "Khurrānt Chāndū-bāz" ("Inveterate Hemp-smoker"), addressed to Munshī Nawal Kishor and complaining that since the new editor Pandit Ratan Nāth Sarshār had taken charge half the population of Lucknow had left the city. He had written such outrageous articles that all the poor opium-eaters, hemp-smokers and other drug addicts were dying of fright, their suppliers had shut up their shops, and the courtesans' establishments were closed for lack of custom - in short all the gay bustle of the city had been stilled. This letter is obviously the work of Sashār himself, and the humorous exaggeration with which he describes the results he would wish to see is typical of him.

The majority of Sarshār's editorials are devoted to social questions of this kind - indeed, it would be more accurate to say that they are devoted to social problems of every conceivable kind. His subjects include the use of the Roman script for Indian languages (17th August 1878 - Sarshār is opposed to this), the difficulties of land-owners (30th August and 5th September 1878), the need for laying out parks and gardens in Lucknow (3rd September 1878), the poverty of Indian farmers and epidemics among livestock (4th September 1878), horse-riding and the benefits of physical exercise (5th September 1878), distress among artisans (10th September 1878), Indian music (17th September 1878 - he advocates the use of a proper system of notation

so that the music can be preserved in writing), obscene language and literature (30th September 1878), false "saints" and superstitions (2nd October 1878 - this is a very amusing article), beggars (2nd and 3rd October 1878), the deplorable personal tone adopted by the Indian press in controversy (5th October 1878), travelling by train (an excellent humorous sketch - 14th October 1878), nursing the sick (15th October 1878) and communal riots (21st January 1879). But there are certain subjects to which he returns more frequently than to any others, and these are of great interest in that they show what he felt to be the most important of the problems confronting his fellow-countrymen. A great many editorials and articles deal with education, and almost as many more relate in one way or another to the status of women. Within a fortnight of becoming editor¹ he writes criticising the editor of Indian Tribune² for opposing the suggestion made by one Mr. Garrat (the spelling is uncertain as the name is written in the Urdu script), an inspector of schools in Calcutta, that in order to discourage early marriages the authorities should announce that in three years time they intend to introduce a regulation barring married students from entering for the matriculation examination. The editor of Indian Tribune is ridiculed for

1. On 19th August 1878.

2. No other details of the paper are given.

arguing that this would be an unwarranted intrusion into domestic affairs. Sarshār argues that such measures are very badly needed, and far from being opposed, should be strongly supported. Other articles make it clear that the main reason for his opposition to early marriage was his concern that nothing should interfere with the needs of education in these years. On 27th September he urges "Hindustanis" (i.e. the people/^{of} the Hindi-Urdu-speaking area) to profit from the example of Bengal. While the Bengalis are going to university and gaining degrees, Hindustanis are getting married and letting their education suffer accordingly, and Hindus are especially open to criticism in this respect. In the same article he speaks of other traditional attitudes amongst both Hindus and Muslims which constitute an obstacle to educational advance. About the Muslims he writes that the cause of their backwardness lies in their traditional system of education; it is quite inappropriate that children should begin their education by learning by heart passages from the Quran, which is written in a language which they do not know. The idea that it would be sacrilege to teach them English is also deplorable. In order to get on in the world they must study such subjects as science, law, medicine and engineering, and must learn English in order to be able to read books on these subjects. The Hindus are criticised for their superstitious ideas that they must not cross the sea to go to England for education. Sarshār took advantage of

any incident which provided him with a peg on which to hang a lecture on education. On 16th October 1878 he describes a quarrel which had taken place in open court between two Muslim vakils, concluding his account with a direct appeal to them.

آنحضرات خدا کیلئے اپنی قوم پر رحم
 کرو۔ اور اپنی اولاد کو
 مدرسہ العلوم میں لانا
 بغیر علم تعلیم کیجئے تا کہ تمہاری قوم
 آئندہ کوئی کام میں ہو جائے۔
 بلاہر آمین۔ (پ)

"Gentlemen, for God's sake take pity on your community and send your children to the Muslim College [the College at Aligarh is probably here intended] so that your community may become of some use in the future - which does not seem likely."

He sees modern education as the key to the progress and prosperity of the country, and it is interesting to note that he is not fully satisfied that the educational institutions established by the British are yet fully adapted to this aim. An editorial on Canning College on 29th November 1878 begins with praise for its achievements,¹

1. He lists the names of former students who have subsequently made their mark in life, concluding by mentioning (in suitably humble terms) his own name.

continues by noting with pleasure that facilities for games had recently been provided, and goes on to hope that soon there will be provision for education for industry, so that the students will be versed in modern methods of manufacture, because for the progress of the country it is very important that students should take up careers in industry and commerce, and not see government service as the sole aim of education. The government cannot provide good jobs to all students after they finish their education, and/^{it}will harm the cause of the extension of education if those who have succeeded in obtaining good education should then go into clerical jobs which can be done equally well by less highly-educated men. Sarshār stresses these themes again in later editorials. On 27th October he writes that we should learn the importance of trade from the Parsees. Besides government service, he sees yakālat as a profession which absorbs far too many. On 4th February 1879 he declares that these days everybody wants to be a yakīl. Most aspirants to this profession do not know even their own language properly, but they somehow pass their examinations and qualify themselves to rob the people and enjoy themselves. He commends the proposal to introduce a law in Bengal in 1880 providing that nobody who has not received higher education should be allowed to practise law, and urges the need for a similar law in other areas. One of his articles on education (20th February 1879) gives a brief flash of the strong anti-

popular bias which characterised so many apostles of the new light. He expresses his satisfaction that the government, which had hitherto paid too much to the education of the lower classes, is now making an effort to meet the special needs of people of good family. He foresees that this will eventually lead to a situation (obviously desirable in his view) where education will be confined to the upper classes.

Second only to his concern for education is his concern for the improvement of the status of Indian women. In a long article published on 13th September 1878 he reviews at length the changes in their position which have occurred through the ages, prefacing his account with a story about the Muslim woman poet and thinker, Rāb'ia Baṣrī. She was asked why no prophet had been born among women; did this not prove that women are less intelligent than men? She replied it was true that no woman had been a prophet; but no woman had claimed that she was God either, as some men had done. The argument that no woman had been a prophet did not prove that women are inferior to men. Sarshār goes on to say that as lovers of history well know, in the period when the Hindus lived in accordance with the teachings of the Vedas, women enjoyed every kind of freedom. There was no prohibition against second marriages, and it was an accepted thing that when a woman's husband died she would marry his younger brother. Amongst the nobility there was the

institution of the svayamvara¹ and in general any woman could choose her own husband. He then traces the increasing restrictions upon their freedom, but notes that in the times depicted in the ancient Indian epics "women were not considered inferior beings, nor were they confined to the house like birds in a cage." In the Sanskrit drama one sees that chaste women moved about freely in public, and there was no thought of purdah. "Their chaste behaviour was their purdah." From the times of Rājā Bhoj their condition worsened from day to day, and after the Islamic conquest they were "imprisoned". "And the result has been that because of the backwardness of one section of society, the whole country was plunged from the zenith of honour into the depths of degradation." It was only after these developments that people began to say that women were "lacking in intelligence". He concludes that in short there is a whole world of difference between the status which women enjoyed in the past and their position at the present day, and that the people of India have the duty to think how they may put an end to the present absurd position. "I do not mean that they [women] should promenade through the bazars, but they should be granted at any rate some of the rights which men enjoy. At least make them worthy to offer you their advice; we

1. The lady would choose a husband from among the suitors who presented themselves.

Indians have reduced them to the position where we cannot even converse with them."

This editorial shows Sarshār's views to have been very much in advance of those of most of his contemporaries in the Urdu-speaking area. He returns to the subject in later editorials. Thus on 28th September 1878 he remarks, "I do not think that even the negro slaves can have suffered such oppression as our womenfolk suffer." He writes also to convince his readers that women's potentialities make them worthy of the higher status which he advocates. Two articles (on 16th and 17th September 1878) tell the stories of famous women like Florence Nightingale, the Turkish girl Fatima who went out to fight for her country on the battlefield, the Indian Rānī who during the Mutiny, in spite of her husband's opposition, assisted the British and a poor ayah who protected the children of her British master and refused to reveal their whereabouts even under torture. He is always quick to defend the honour of Indian women. A whole article (16th August 1878) is devoted to praise of their chaste conduct. Besides advocating greater freedom for women, he also gives serious thought to their education. On 18th January 1879 he writes about the success of the daughter of Brijkishor Ghosh who had passed the matriculation examination. He praises her success in glowing terms and exhorts other girls of good family to emulate her example, but requests the university syndicate to arrange special subjects for women

of a kind which would prove useful to them in later life. At the same time it is a "happy thought" that they can become great mathematicians, historians, and so on.

His interest in the reform of marriage customs derives in part from his interest in women's emancipation. An article on the injustice of marrying young girls to old men (28th September 1878) is an instance of this. This is also an aspect of his opposition to polygamy (2nd and 28th September 1878) though here he is more concerned to stress the difficulties which confront husbands when they are foolish enough to marry more than one wife. His opposition to early marriage is related more to his concern for education, as we have already seen.

It is because he sees the British as the bringers of science and modern education to India that he is a stout supporter of British rule. But articles on political subjects are appreciably fewer in number than those on social questions, and it is noticeable that among them there is a preponderance of writing on subjects that have little or no direct bearing on Indian policies. The largest number are devoted to the war between Turkey and Russia, and show a warm sympathy for Turkey. It seems that Sarshār wishes to assure his Muslim readers that the British government will go to the help of Turkey, and on 17th August 1878 he praises Lord Beaconsfield highly for his attempt to persuade the government to adopt this course. Other editorial articles

cover such subjects as the treaty of Berlin (23rd August 1878) and the dispute over the frontier of Austria (16th August 1878).

Where he writes of British policies in India he tends to select those relating to the internal welfare of the country. On 12th August 1878 there is an editorial on the famine in the North Western Provinces, praising the government for the measures taken to help its victims and noting with approval that suggestions made by the local government were accepted by the government of India. On 26th August he notes with approval that the Government has invited all who wish to do so, to submit their views on the causes of famine and measures to prevent it. On 14th August 1878 he writes on the administration of the prisons and praises a Mr. Horder¹ whose efforts had brought about improved conditions for prisoners. On 6th September 1878 he praises the organisation of the mail. His editorial on communal riots is interesting because it strikes a somewhat different note. While praising the British administration as usual, he ventures to criticise the role of the police in communal clashes. He expresses the view that their prominence on the scene when communal clashes are feared is undesirable, and that it would be better if they were kept unobtrusively in reserve.

1. رورڈر

Moreover, too much importance should not be attached to every small manifestation of communal disharmony; there is a long tradition of mutual consideration between the two communities which is generally sufficient to ensure that no serious outbreak occurs. Generally his attitude is one of great enthusiasm for the British. There is enthusiastic praise for the British in the issue of 18th November 1878, when the Prince of Wales' durbar in Qaisar Bagh is colourfully described. The most striking example is his editorial of 20th November 1878 - one of a number which deal with the war against Afghanistan. On behalf of the Indians he assures the government that any time when their help is needed they are prepared to give it; for whatever faults they may have, they do not forget kindnesses done to them. He reminds the government how when Indians were asked to go to Malta to help the British government there, despite Hindu religious prejudices against crossing the sea, both Hindu and Muslim soldiers went to fight in the war and proved to the whole world how faithfully they could serve.

In this chapter we have taken account only of those articles in which Sarshār writes directly, and for the most part in a serious tone, on the problems of his time, and have confined ourselves to the brief period from August 1878 to January 1879, a period in which the materials which were later to be incorporated in Fasāna-i-Azād did not yet occupy

a very prominent place in Avadh Akhbār and in which there is not the slightest evidence that he had yet conceived the idea of a propagandist novel as a means of bringing them before a wide audience. The clarity of the picture which emerges is striking. The main ideas which Fasāna-i-Azād was later written to propagate were already fully formed in his mind. When he came to adopt a fictional medium through which to express them, he already knew what he wanted to say; his problem was how to work his themes into the texture of a narrative. It is at this point, therefore, that some consideration of the existing prose narrative tradition becomes relevant to the study of his work.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROSE NARRATIVE TRADITION

Fasāna i Āzād is not the first work in Urdu literature which one can call a modern narrative; but it is that which is most closely linked with the older narrative tradition in Urdu prose, and it cannot be put in its proper perspective unless some account of this tradition is given.

Narrative gained acceptance as a legitimate form of good literature in Urdu verse long before it did in Urdu prose. But there had long been a flourishing tradition of Urdu prose narrative when Sarshār started writing Fasāna i Āzād, although it had not yet been committed to writing. The most important element in this tradition is that of the dāstān, a long romantic chronicle of heroic exploits similar to those of medieval Europe. The huge Dāstān i Amīr Hamza is that which dominates the whole scene. Historians of Urdu literature have devoted very little attention to investigating the history of the dāstān in India, contenting themselves for the most part with repeating the traditional accounts of its origin with little or no comment of their own. Some of the dāstān-go relate

these traditions. Thus Tasadduq Husain writes:

داستان امیر حمزہ صاحب قیران جلی
نسبت مشہور ہے کہ علامہ شیخ
ابو الفضل فیضی نے جلال الدین امیر
بادشاہ دہلی کی تعریف طبع اور دل
بدا نے سے واسطے سے - - - - -
تصنیف
- - - - - کیا

"The Tale of Amīr Hamza Sāhib Qirān, about which it is generally said that Allāma Shaikh Abu'l Fazl Faizī [sic] (1) wrote it for the entertainment and amusement of Jalāl ud Dīn Akbar, King of Delhi" [the Mughal Emperor Akbar, 1556-1605]....(2)

One Shaikh Sajjād Husain, who in 1892 published an English translation of part of the Dāstān i Amīr Hamza writes in his preface:

"This book, it is said, was composed during the time of Akbar the Great by his minister Amīr Khusro to divert the Emperor's attention from the Mahābhārat, the exploits of which had created an impression on his mind." (3)

Sharar recounts the same tradition as Sajjād Husain:

- - - - - کہتے ہیں کہ شہنشاہ اکبر کے زمانے
میں امیر خسرو نام ایک قابل شخص
نے اسے تصنیف کیا

-
1. Abu'l Fazl and Faizī were in fact brothers - not one person.
 2. Aftābī Shujāat. Lucknow. 1902.
 3. p. 5
 4. Sharar, op.cit., p.98.

"They say that a talented person named Amīr Khusrau wrote it in the time of the Emperor Akbar."

He adds, however:

تاریخ سے ثابت ہے کہ ملوک تغلق
کے عہد میں داستان امیر حمزہ موجود
تھی

"History proves that the Dāstān i Amīr Hamza already existed in the period of the Tughlak Kings" [14th century].

Saksena, by contrast, goes even further than the dāstān-go, presenting as fact what they are content to report as tradition:

"The romance of Amir Hamza Sahab Qirān ... is a product of the fertile brain of Abul Faiz Faizi...." 2

In fact, the origin of the tale certainly goes back earlier, and there are tales of Amīr Hamza in a number of other countries besides India.

As far as India is concerned, the general belief has been that the dāstān was originally current in India in Persian versions, and was only subsequently 'translated' into Urdu. Thus Taṣadduq Ḥusain continues the passage already quoted with the words:

1. Ibid.,
2. Op.cit., p.318.

۔۔۔۔۔ زبان فارسی میں اس خوبی

و خوش اسلوبی سے تصنیف کیا کہ
اکبر بادشاہ پر کیا موقوف بڑے
بڑے پائمال نازک خیال فہمی اور
بلغا اسپر دل دادہ ہو گئے رختہ رفتہ
اسی ایسی شہرت ہوئی اور ایسی
مطبوع فلاقی ہوئی کہ عالم میں
ڈنکے بجنے لگے اور جھنڈے لگنے لگے
تکے۔ کوئی اسپر و رئیس وارفندہ

نراج آیا نہ تھا جلو اسے
سننے کا شوق نہ ہو جتنی کہ غربا
میں بھی اسکا ہیر چہ ایں پھیلا کہ ہر
شخص کو اپنے خم غلط کرنے کا ذریعہ
پانچہ آیا۔ جہاں دوست و احباب
جمع ہوئے دانتان اڑنے لگی لڑائی
کا ذکر سن کر کم بہتوں کو بھی جوش و
جہالت آنے لگا جن و عشق کے ذکر
سے عاشق نرا ہوں کے د میں محبت
و الفت کی پر آنے لگی جب وہ زمانہ
آیا کہ فارسی زبان کا فوج سے اردو
مسلک کے شکر سے شدت کھائی۔ فارسی زبان
خال غالب ہیں رہ گئی اور اردو روز افزوں ترقی
پذیر ہوئی اس داستان کے فارسی دفتر بھی جیاب

کالعدم ہو گئے مگر چونکہ لوگوں کے دلوں میں اشتیاق
اسی طرح تازہ بہ تازہ تو بوجوہ باقی تھا اکثر حضرات نے جا بجا
کے اردو زبان میں بیان کرنا شروع کیا

"... He wrote it in Persian so well, and in so fine a style that not only King Akbar but great and subtle scholars and writers of perfection fell in love with it. Gradually it became so famous and so popular with all men that its drums began to beat throughout the world and its standards were planted fast. There was no nobleman of taste and spirit who did not love to hear it, so much so that even amongst the poor the fame of it so spread that every man found in it the means to forget his sorrows. Where ever friends and comrades gathered together this tale would be told for their enjoyment. The tales of battle would rouse the spirits and heighten the ardour of the least courageous of men, and the tales of love and beauty would make the strong tide of love and passion to flow in lovers' hearts. When that day came when the forces of Persian were vanquished by the mighty army of Urdu, the Persian tongue lost all but a few strongholds while the strength of Urdu grew from day to day. The Persian volumes of the tale became rare and near to non-existence, but since in men's hearts the love of it remains undiminished, unvarying and ever-new, many gentlemen from various sources began to tell it in the Urdu tongue,"¹

The same writer says in another place:

1. Op.cit., p. 3 The sense of the last sentence is not clear. The words may mean "began to tell various parts of it..." rather than "from various sources".

مصنف اس داستان کے ---
 مشہور آفاق ابو الفاضل فیضی ہیں کہیں
 یہ داستان بزبان فارسی تھی اور
 ابو جہ عزیز الوہود نے سوائے
 سوائے تثنیٰ نہ شاہی یا امرا کے
 والا تقاسم کے دستیاب ہونا اسکا
 ممکن نہ تھا لہذا ہر شخص اسکے
 ترجمہ سے بہرہ یاب نہ ہوسکتا
 تھا۔ البتہ کچھ چیدہ چیدہ ارباب
 نے اس داستان کو حاجات یاد کیا
 اور بطور بیت داستان کوئی سے اسکو بیان
 کرنا شروع کیا۔

"The author of this tale is the world-renowned Abu'l Fazal Faizī but this tale was in Persian, and because it was extremely rare, only in the royal library or in the collections of highly placed nobles could it be found. Thus not every man could have the good fortune to become acquainted with its translation [sic]. However, a few chosen spirits who loved it learnt it here and there, (1) by heart, and as professional dāstān-go began to recite it. (2)

If we leave aside the very dubious attribution of a complete Persian original of the later Urdu versions to a courtier of Akbar, there is substantial truth in Tasadduq Husain's account. ~~There do indeed seem to have been Persian~~

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1. Again, the phrase is ambiguous. The meaning may be either 'from various sources' or 'various parts of it.'
 2. Ibid., Vol.II, Introduction. (The pages of the introduction are not numbered.)

versions (whether oral or written) of at any rate parts of the tale current in India before the rise of Urdu largely replaced the use of Persian as an oral medium. Thus one of the famous dāstān-go who was responsible for the recording of the written Urdu version notes at one point:

(This is borne out by a reference to these versions made by one of the dāstān-go responsible for committing the Urdu version to writing, when he notes that the ^{the} /version which he is recording differs in some respects (of which he gives a few details) from Persian versions ~~with which he is familiar).~~

At the same time it is clear that our present Urdu version is largely the work of the dāstān go themselves. Even a cursory study of this version, and of such information as we have about the circumstances of its composition, fully warrants this conclusion.

This version of the dāstān dates only from the last decades of the 19th century, when the Nawal Kishor Press got together some of the most famous dāstān go

of the day and had the scribes take down at their dictation the version as they told it.¹ The resulting volumes are enormously long. Rāz Yazdānī's article on the subject, which corrects much inaccurate information given by earlier writers, lists the contents as follows:

Part 1. Naushīrvān nāma	2 vols.	1780 pp.
" 2. Kochak Bākhtar	1 vol.	708 pp.
" 3. Bālā Bākhtar	1 vol.	820 pp.
" 4. Īraj nāma	2 vols.	1426 pp.
" 5. Tilism i Hoshrubā	7 vols.	7272 pp.
" 6. Sandalī nāma	1 vol.	472 pp.
" 7. Tūraj nāma	2 vols.	2064 pp.
" 8. L'al nāma	2 vols.	1900 pp.
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	18 vols.	16,442 pp.
	<hr/>	<hr/>

He add that this list leaves out of account those related volumes without which the continuity of the tales is not maintained, and that if all these be included the totals would come to 49 volumes and about 45,000 pages.

1. This and much of the information following is taken from an article by Rāz Yazdānī, Urdū Dāstanon par Kām Kā tajziya aur tabsira, published in Ajkal, Delhi, issue dated July 1960.

In the same article, the writer gives the results of his attempt to trace the sources of these recorded versions. In this he had the collaboration of Amīr Husain Nurānī, one of the present proprietors of the Nawal Kishor Press, who wrote to him that no Persian originals of the dāstān could be traced, though "there certainly were one or two Persian books which formed the basis."

Rāz Yazdānī himself writes that the only relevant Persian manuscript extant is one entitled Rumūz i Hamza, in which one finds the names of only three of the eight parts of the Dāstān. These and perhaps "Persian manuscripts - two in number - prepared on the orders of the Kings of Avadh"¹ in his opinion constitute the only possible Persian "basis" of the Dāstān in its present form; by far the greater part of it is the work of the dāstān-go, and the version now recorded dates from about the middle of the eighteenth century. There seems no reason to quarrel with these conclusions.

Turning to internal evidence, it is clear that whether or not oral or written basic materials in Persian were available to him, the dāstān-go to a

1. He gives no details of these two manuscripts.

considerable extent improvised upon his basic theme as he went along. For example when he describes the birth of a prince all the details of how the baby was cared for and how the occasion was celebrated derive from the Lucknow of his own day and are related in the language of his day. The women characters in particular reflect the atmosphere, and speak the characteristic language of early nineteenth-century Lucknow. There are descriptions of fairs, markets, weddings and other scenes which are clearly drawn from the dāstān go's own observation and experience.

To what length this improvisation went it is not possible to say, since we now possess only the versions recorded by these particular dāstān go, and therefore have no means of knowing how substantial was the common basis upon which the individual dāstān go built. The general content of Dāstān is easily described. The main hero is Amīr Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet; but though Hamza is a historical figure, there is little or no attempt to present his exploits as actual history. He is portrayed as the perfect Muslim warrior who inspired by the desire to serve his beloved Mahr Nigār, spends his life in unending wars with the infidels in which he is always finally victorious. They oppose him not only by arms but also by sorcery and enchantment, and he counters this with the help

of his trusted companion 'Amar Ayyār - 'Amar the Artful - who has a magic bag called Zambīl out of which he can cause almost anything to appear and into which he can cause almost anything to disappear. A part of his role is to provide comic relief to the exploits of the hero. There are many subsidiary heroes in the tale - for example, Asad and Iraj (both sons of Amīr Ḥamza) and magicians who come over to Amīr Hamza's side as the story develops. When every other resource fails him, the hero may use an amulet given to him by a venerable old man divinely endowed with supernatural powers, and this will rescue him from even the most extreme perils.

There is no subtlety of characterization; everything is presented in black and white, and the interest of the story derives from the endless succession of incidents rather than from any complex analysis of those taking part. Spice is added by episodes of love-making and enchantment. Asad and Iraj especially are presented as charmers whom no woman can resist and their amorous adventures are described in a detail which sometimes comes close to pornography. The dāstān go see nothing un-Islamic about this and it is noteworthy too that all these Islamic heroes drink wine. One of the enchantresses is called Bahār (Spring) because whenever she appears on the field of battle she creates the illusion of springtime all around her and she claims her victims by giving them magic flowers to smell which places

them in her power. These and similar scenes give full scope to the dāstān-go's descriptive power and make interesting and attractive reading. Their language is highly stylised; and they delight in displaying an enormous range of vocabulary and an ability to compose fluently in rhythmic and rhyming prose. It should not be thought that this restricted their audience in any way. Even when their language was not fully understood it was much enjoyed. One is reminded of the compliment paid to a professional storyteller in the west of Ireland as "speaking such fine hard Irish that Devil two words together in it would any man understand."¹ However, in addition to stylised prose, there are many passages of straightforward description and of dialogue in natural Urdu which even the uneducated would have no difficulty in following.

It is well attested fact that in Lucknow these orally recited dāstāns were extremely popular. It is not only the dāstān go themselves who made this claim. Sharar writes

چند ہی روز میں لکھنؤ کے اندر اس قدر
[داستان گوئی] اس قدر فروغ ہو گیا
کہ کوئی دولت مند نہ تھا جسکی سرکار
میں کوئی داستان گوئی نہ مقرر ہو

1. Robert Graves quotes this remark in his introduction (p.9) to his translation of Apuleius, The Golden Ass, (Penguin Books, 1950), and the context serves to remind us that the dāstān go had their parallels not only in other Eastern lands but also in the ancient classical world and in modern Ireland.

"In a very short time the Dāstān became so popular in Lucknow that there was not a wealthy man in the city who did not retain a dāstān-go in his employment."

And the dāstān-go did not cater only for the taste of the nobility. The ordinary people of the city listened to them eagerly. Sharar tells us that there were "four arts" involved in the recitation of the dāstān -

نرم - نرم - حسن و عشق اور عیاری

In other words the dāstān-go would vary his style of recitation according to his theme, adopting one style for the themes of war, another for courtly life a third for love and a fourth for tricks and stratagems. So popular were their recitals that according to Sharar their style of speech exercised an "immeasurable" effect upon the language of "the people of the city". Sharar wrote his book "something over fifty years" after the annexation of Avadh, and his nostalgic mood no doubt leads him into exaggeration; but even when full allowance is made for this, the importance and the popularity of the dāstān still emerges clearly. We have said above that the exuberant language of the more ornate passages was no obstacle to popular appreciation, even where it was not fully understood. There

is in addition, much positive evidence of the wide audience to whom the dāstān-go addressed himself. Picturesque and colourful description is interluded with popular verses, ghazals, dohās, doggerel composed by the dāstān-go himself, and anything else which could enhance his appeal to his hearers. It is a point worth stressing that the popular character of the dāstān automatically excluded it, in the eyes of the sophisticated, from the category of literature. This is the reason why until very recent years it has found little or no mention in the histories of Urdu literature or in works of literary criticism, and why serious study of it has barely begun. Yet its key importance in the development of Urdu prose narrative is incontestible.

Closely comparable to the dāstān in many ways was the fasāna - and this was literature, for although its themes and characteristics closely resemble those of the dāstān, it was the work of highly cultured, sophisticated men who moved only in aristocratic society. The most famous example of this form is Rajab 'Alī Beg Sarūr's Fasani i 'Ajāib, written some time before 1824-5, but not published until some twenty-five years later.¹ The fasāna differs from the dāstān in only two main respects - first in its

1. cf. Mas'ūd Hasan Rizvī's introduction to his edition of Sarur's Fasāna i 'Ibrat, Lucknow, 1957.

greater sophistication, and secondly in its relative shortness.¹ But its ingredients are the same. There is usually a single hero who is a perfect human being endowed even from boyhood with all the qualities of the most admirable of men. He falls in love with a beautiful princess. Sometimes this is not even love at first sight, for accounts of her matchless beauty make him fall helplessly in love with her before he has even seen her. The story consists of all the adventures which befall him in making his way to her and winning her hand, adventures in which he has to contend with supernatural as well as ordinary human difficulties. The fasāna is written in the ornate stylised prose derived from Persian models, and this style is sustained more consistently and with greater sophistication than in the dāstān. It is interesting to note that Rajab 'Alī Beg Sarūr clearly felt that he was doing his best to produce in Urdu what he would have dearly loved to produce in Persian if he had felt equal to the task. Thus he wrote of himself:

نہ عربی میں داخل ہوا - نہ فارسی میں
 کمال ہوا - - - - - بہت بھٹی سے اردو
 کے بھٹے میں اوقات بہتی - - -
 لکھنے دن - - - - - شعر میں کمال تمام

1. Fasāna i 'Ajāib runs to only 314 pages in the Allahabad, 1928 edition.

راہب وہ بھی نہ ہو سکا تو نثر
کی طرف خیال آیا

"I made no headway in Arabic, nor could I attain perfection in Persian... and, my resolve failing me, I passed my time in writing Urdu.... For some days... I entertained the vain desire to write verse. When I failed even in this my thoughts turned to prose." ①

This was the prose narrative tradition which Sarshār inherited. The influence of Sarūr upon his earliest writings has already been noted briefly in Chapter I. In subsequent chapters we shall see how the dāstān and the fasāna influenced his first major work.

1. Quoted by Mas'ūd Ḥasan Rizvī, op.cit., p.3.

CHAPTER V

FASĀNA I AZĀD(i) Plot, and Sources.

Fasāna i Azād is a very long work comprising four quarto volumes with a total of about 3,000 pages and roughly two and a quarter million words. Most of the statements about its date are misleading, mainly because they speak of "Fasāna i Azād" when they in fact mean the first volume only. Thus Chakbast writes that the story ran from December 1878 to December 1879 and was published in book form in 1880. This statement reproduces almost word for word that which appears on the title page of volume one. Yet even in relation to this volume it is completely inaccurate, as reference to the file of Avadh Akhbār shows. As stated earlier, Sarshār conceived the idea of writing Fasāna i Azād after the success of his articles contributed to Avadh Akhbār under the heading Zarāfat, and incorporated some of these articles in it. The files of Avadh Akhbār show that the Zarāfat series had been started in the issue dated 13th August 1878 with a humorous sketch of a conversation between a schoolmaster and the father of a boy who had failed his examinations. It was followed on 17th August by a sketch of a Lucknow mushā'ira. (Neither of these pieces was subsequently included in Fasāna i Azād.) On 23rd August appeared the article which now forms the opening of Fasāna i Azād, and a continuation of

this appeared on 28th August. Seven more pieces appeared between 2nd September and 23rd September (both dates inclusive) of which one does not appear in Fasāna i Azād.

The article of 23rd September is prefaced by a statement of Sarshār's aim in writing the series.

اس سے اصلی مقصد ہمارا یہ ہے ناظرین
 اودہ اخبار بہ پیرایہ نطرافت تعلیم
 مذاق و بول چال اور موقع مناسب
 کے سجاواریات اور ہر قسم کی
 صحبتوں کی کیفیت و طرز معاشرت
 کا یہ واقفیت نامہ حاصل کریں

کہ مجاہد ان کی جو حالتیں
 ہیں اور بقدر اثر صحبت زمانہ
 کا بچے اس سے ہمارے ملک
 کو فائدہ عظیم پہونچے تاکہ
 ہمارے ملک کو فائدہ عظیم
 پہونچے تاکہ نیک خیالات

افلاقِ حند سے لوگوں کے دل تنور
 اور خیالات فائدہ اور خفا کی رزیدہ
 کی تاریکی سے پاک ہوں اور
 کامل فیض آید مقبول تربیت سے راستی
 پسند طبیعتوں کو پہونچو انکو پڑھ کر بلحاظ زبانہ دانی
 اور خیال عمدہ و تقاضا لطف و مذاق زریحہ حلی حاصل کریں

"Our real aim in this series is to enable the readers of Avadh Akhbār in the guise of humour to become fully conversant with education and culture and good taste, with correct conversational usage and the idioms appropriate to various occasions, with the atmosphere of every kind of gathering and with the manners of society as a whole... so that [knowledge of] the various states of human communities and the effect of the company one keeps and the climate of the age may bring substantial benefit to our country, so that men's minds may be illumined by the radiance of good thoughts and excellent morals, and their mentality cleansed of the darkness of corrupting ideas and the unworthy traits of the ill-bred, and upright minds may receive the full benefits that accrue from a sane training ... Our aim is that from reading these articles they may at one and the same time derive pleasure and enjoyment and amusement on the one hand and linguistic accomplishment and lofty ideas on the other."

This is a very fair description of the aims which Sarshār does indeed keep in view throughout the book. The emphasis on the excellence of the language is very characteristically Lucknow, and it is noteworthy that the statement itself, which has not been quoted in full here, is a typical piece of traditional ornate prose.

Reference to the files show that the final instalment of volume one appeared not in December 1879, as the title page states, but in the issue of Avadh Akhbār dated 5th January 1880. It is noteworthy that this final instalment still appears under the heading "Zarāfat". Thus the statement of the title page, which has been followed by all subsequent writers, is wrong in almost every material respect (though

the chronogram on the same title page does give the date 1880).

With regard to the subsequent volumes precise information is more difficult to obtain. The first instalment of the second volume appeared in the issue dated 1st July 1880, and for the first time was headed Fasāna i Azād. Subsequent instalments (corresponding to pages 1-8 of the second volume) continued to appear until the issue of 30th July. Thereafter, further instalments were issued in the form of special supplements to the paper, separately priced, and supplied to those who ordered it. These are not included in the file in the British Museum, and the file itself runs up to 1881 only. I have been unable to discover either the dates of subsequent instalments or the date of publication of volume two in book form. No information at all is available about the mode of issue of volumes three and four. We may surmise that they must have appeared by about 1885, for the British Museum catalogue lists a "second edition" of all four volumes dated 1887.

To give even a bare outline of the story of Fasāna i Azād is almost impossible. The main plot gets lost in a variety of incidents and stories but most of the development takes place in the first volume which consists of 672 pages. Here we find Azād, the hero of the novel, roaming about in all parts of "the city" - which is obviously Lucknow, though this is generally not stated. He meets people of all classes and ideas. He goes to see the different festivals, like 'Īd,

Shab barāt, Muḥarram, and Basant. He travels a great deal and meets more and more people. Sometimes he is alone and sometimes accompanied by a companion who asks him questions on different problems like the system of children's education, child marriage, the ways of the idle sons of so-called noble families, the superiority of the English way of life and many more. Āzād discusses all these things, and from his arguments we gather that he is a great supporter of the "New Light". All of this occupies the first 51 pages, and only then does the main story - such as it is - begin. One day Āzād meets an old man who asks him to write a letter for him to his young wife. From the letter Āzād gathers that his wife is very angry with him. Āzād goes to deliver the letter personally, and although she observes purdah, sees the wife, who is a very beautiful woman. He at once falls in love with her. After roaming about a great deal and meeting with many adventures he becomes attached to a Nawāb's Court. This Nawāb has a quail called Safshikan, which the Nawāb thinks possesses supernatural powers. One day Āzād hides the quail and everybody thinks that it has flown away. The Nawāb is very sad at his loss. Āzād volunteers to find it. The Nawāb gives him a very valuable camel to ride and Āzād, on the pretext of looking for the quail, sets out on a long journey. Again he roams everywhere. He goes to stay in an inn and there he meets a very beautiful bhatiārī¹ named Allah Rakkhī.

1. Innkeeper.

He at once falls in love with her, and promises to marry her; but after some time he realises that this would be a mistake, for he cannot marry a low-class woman. So he changes his mind. At this Allah Rakkhī gets very angry, and she threatens to sue him for breach of promise, whereupon Azād runs away from the inn and does not return. One day he goes for a walk outside the city and hears some people talking about two very beautiful young sisters who come boating on the river. Azād waits, and when he sees them, at once falls in love with the elder sister who is called Ḥusn Arā. Ḥusn Arā's servant, an old and trusted man, tells Ḥusn Arā about Azād and praises him highly; and Ḥusn Arā expresses a wish to see him. The old servant invites Azād to Ḥusn Arā's house and when Ḥusn Arā sees him she is very favourably impressed. At this point two men on horse-back ride up and challenge Azād to fight them. The old servant tells them that if they want to win Ḥusn Arā's hand they must first submit to an examination to test their knowledge. They agree, but cannot compete with Azād, and have to go away.¹ Azād goes to see Ḥusn Arā's grandmother and she approves of him. Ḥusn Arā tells him that if he wants to marry her he will first have to go and help the Turks in their war against Russia, and Azād agrees to this. One day Azād is going to see Ḥusn Arā when he meets on the way an elderly man called Khojī who, like him, is also

1. It is interesting to note that this examination has nothing to do with the "New Light". The candidates are first asked to compose a line of verse extempore and then to compose a chronogram.

attached to the Nawāb's court. Khojī and Azād become friends and decide to join forces. After a few days Azād sets out for Turkey. He first goes to Bombay. On the way he meets Allah Rakkhī and tells her frankly that he cannot marry her because he has promised to marry a very beautiful girl of good family. Allah Rakkhī now reveals to him her real identity. She is not a bhatiārī but a girl of respectable family; and Azād realises that she is the young wife of the old man whose letter he had delivered.

In Bombay Azād meets Husn Arā's cousin and her husband Mirzā Sāhab. He stays with them for some time, and then he and Khojī leave for Rūm.

Meanwhile Humāyān Far (a prince from the family of a Lucknow Nawab) who lives in a house opposite Husn Arā's, sees the two sisters. He is much attracted by them and one day, dressed as a woman, goes to see them. He falls in love with the younger sister, Sihpahr Arā.

One day Allah Rakkhī meets a Nawāb in a garden. The Nawab's courtiers insult her, and she feels so outraged that she becomes a jogan. At this point the first volume ends. The second volume consists of 442 pages, and starts with an account of Azād's voyage. His boat is caught in a storm and sinks. He shows great courage in saving the lives of others and greatly impresses everybody. A rich Indian businessman is very pleased with him and gives him a letter of introduction to his son Hurmuz Jī, who lives in Alexandria.

In Humāyūn Far's house a fire breaks out, and it is with great difficulty that his life is saved. Later he receives a letter from a man called 'the Shawsawār',¹ who admits that he set fire to the house because he is in love both with Ḥusn Arā and Sihpahr Arā; he threatens Humāyūn Far with death if he persists in his plan to marry Sihpahr Arā. After sending the letter the Shawsawār takes fright and runs away from the city. In a village he sees a jogan (Allah Rakkhī) and falls in love with her. With great difficulty the jogan manages to get rid of him.

Azād and Khojī reach Alexandria, and Azād goes to see the Turkish consul. During the night a dwarf gives a very strong purgative to Khojī who had defeated him in a wrestling match. Khojī becomes very ill. Azād leaves him in the care of the Turkish consul, and himself proceeds to Constantinople.

A cousin of Ḥusn Arā's, Bahār un Nisā wants Ḥusn Arā to marry a young man called Muḥammad 'Askarī, but Ḥusn Arā disapproves of him. Muḥammad 'Askarī, with the help of Bahār un Nisā then gets a false news item reporting Azād's marriage printed in a newspaper. Ḥusn Arā reads it and is so much affected by it that she falls seriously ill. Seeing this, they repent, and when she recovers tell her that the news was false.

1. His name is never given. Shawsawār means something like 'the cavalry officer'.

Azād reaches Turkey. He is waiting to see Turkey's Minister of Defence, when he encounters a very beautiful woman called Maida who falls in love with him. Azād flirts with her, but tells her he cannot marry her because he has promised to marry another girl. Maida is offended and tells the Minister of Defence that Azād is a Russian spy. Azād is arrested but after some time his innocence is proved and he is released. Maida feels very sorry for what she has done and helps Azād by giving him money for his uniform and expenses. He gets a commission in the Turkish army.

After more adventures the jogan (Allah Rakkhī) runs off to the jungle. Here she meets an old man (who is, in fact, her husband). The old man dies in the night and next morning a woman who used to come to see him shows the jogan where he kept his money and valuables. The jogan thus acquires great wealth and starts living in great comfort and style under the name of Surayya Begam.

Azād performs wonderful feats of bravery and gains promotion in the Turkish army. Khojī makes his way to join him. Humāyūn Far sends a proposal of marriage for Sihpahr Arā and it is accepted, but before the marriage takes place he gets a letter from the Shawsawār, threatening to kill him. He takes no notice of this letter, but in spite of all precautions taken by the police, he is killed by the Shawsawār.

A very beautiful Russian woman comes to the battle-field to fight Azād, but instead of fighting her Azād starts

kissing her and she takes him prisoner. His captor, whose name is Clarissa, decides that Azād should be sent to Siberia, but on the way he is kidnapped by the soldiers of a Polish princess. The Polish princess asks Azād to marry her, but he refuses, and is therefore thrown into prison.

Khojī then overcomes Azād's objections, and he agrees to marry her. But before the marriage takes place two very handsome men come to see her and she falls in love with them. To get out of this difficulty, they are obliged to tell her that they are women. (In fact they are Maida and Clarissa who have disguised themselves as men and come in search of Azād.) Azād marries the Polish princess, but they find out that the Russians, who know that the princess has had Azād kidnapped, have come in search of him, and they decide that it is not safe for him to stay. So Azād runs off and rejoins the Turkish army.

Şurayya Begam (Allah Rakkhī) who is now very rich, meets a man who looks exactly like Azād but in reality is a robber called Azād Mirzā. For some time he deceives her into thinking that he is Azād, and so manages to rob her house. Again she is reduced to poverty and runs away.

A faqir comes to Sihpahr Arā's house and claims that if she will go to Humāyūn Far's grave he can be raised again from the dead. The whole city is much excited over this. Sihpahr Arā rides to the grave and Humāyūn Far emerges alive. Many people are incredulous and believe that the man

who calls himself Humāyūn Far is an impostor. The district magistrate orders the grave to be opened and Humāyūn Far's mother now discloses that the man who had apparently come out of the grave is Humāyūn Far's brother who had been lost when he was a child. Sihpahr Arā and Humāyūn Far's brother are now married. The Shahsawār threatens to kill him, and the police search for him.

Azād reaches the Turkish army and again proves himself to be the most brave and valiant warrior. A Russian spy comes, and Azād is deceived into telling him that the Polish princess had married him. After getting this information, the Russians put the princess into jail, but with the help of an army officer whom she later marries, she escapes to America.

Azād fights very bravely. He is taken prisoner by the Russians, but escapes.

He realises that his Turkish fellow-officers are jealous of him and do not want him any more. So he and Khojī decide to go back to India. Maida, who is deeply in love with Azād, accompanies him. Clarissa too, who is afraid to return to Russia because she had helped Azād, decides to accompany them.

All four of them return to India together, to find that Azād is a very famous man. After staying in Bombay for some time they go to the city where Husn Arā lives. Khojī cannot accompany them because he is very ill; and Azād

abandons him. When he reaches the city where Ḥusn Arā lives he finds that Allah Rakkhī (Ṣurayya Begam) is now married to a rich Nawāb and when he tries to see her, she refuses.

The Shahsawār threatens to kill Āzād too, but before he can do anything, Āzād, with the help of the police, arrests him and he is hanged for the murder of Humāyūn Far. Maida decides that she will not marry Āzād, and with Clarissa she devotes her life to the education of Indian women. After some time they come in contact with Mme. Blavatsky and join the Theosophical Society.

Āzād marries Ḥusn Arā and within a year becomes the father of twins. He is a well-known and greatly respected man, and devotes much time to the propagation of new ideas, and to education, commerce and industry. When war breaks out against Afghanistan he is asked by the government to go and help. He goes, and again proves himself to be a very valiant soldier. Then he comes back home and lives a very happy and useful life, devoted to the advancement of his country.

As can be seen from this short summary, the plot (if it can be called a plot) is not very different in character from that of the dāstān, and the whole work is on a dāstān-like scale. In the dāstān tradition, the whole story revolves around the hero, who again has much in common with the dāstān hero. Sarshār has tried to create a perfect man - handsome, brave, intelligent, talented, a great lover, and one who has such a fatal attraction for women that, from

slave girl¹ to princess, from bhatiārī to begam, all fall prey to his charms. Yet in spite of all temptations (and Azād is easily tempted) the hero remains faithful to his lady love. She, in the typical dāstān tradition, has set a condition which he must fulfil in order to win her hand. He meets great dangers, but, again in the same tradition, surmounts every hardship and comes back victorious to marry his lady love and lives happily ever after.

The heroine too, greatly resembles the dāstān heroine. Both have beauty, wit, and learning, described in the same glowing terms. In the dāstān, the heroine regularly has a true friend who knows all her secret thoughts, and is a sympathetic listener and adviser, and a great comfort to her in her distress. In Fasāna i Azād Sihpahr Arā, Husn Arā's younger sister, fulfils just this role. Similarly, the hero always has his trusty companion or squire. In Amīr Hamza it is 'Amar 'Ayyār ('Amar the Artful) and in Fasāna i Azād it is Khojī who in many ways plays much the same role as 'Amar does. Like 'Amar, he is completely devoted to the hero, and like 'Amar he provides the element of comic relief in the tale. The two even resemble each other in their appearance, for both are ugly and lean. Where Khojī sets out to help Azād (when he is in a Russian prison) he does so in the same way as 'Amar so often helps Amīr Hamzā, by going out in disguise.

1. The slave girl of Princess of Poland falls in love with Azād.

There is the same looseness of plot, and the same readiness to digress to enter upon a full and colourful description of some incidental scene.

There are resemblances in style also. Sarshār often lapses into the rhyming, Persianised, highly ornate prose of the dāstān and Sarūr's Fasāna i 'Ajāib, which, as we have seen earlier, he writes with facility.

It is striking that, despite these clear resemblances to the dāstān, Sarshār nowhere acknowledges his debt to it. In this he expresses the attitude, which continued long after his day, of aristocratic disdain for anything so plebeian in character. As we have seen, he was quite blunt in his expression of contempt for the common herd, and though the nobility too enjoyed the dāstān, it did not class it as literature; and neither does Sarshār. To acknowledge the contribution of the fasāna was quite in accord with good taste, and Sarshār makes appreciative references to Sarūr. But for all that, it is the dāstān rather than the fasāna that his work more closely resembles.

Perhaps even more striking is the fact that even though he praises Sarūr, he is always at pains to stress that his own work is of quite a different character. He always asserts emphatically that what he is writing is "a novel". While Fasāna i Azād was appearing as a serial, readers of Avadh Akhbār would write in to the paper giving their opinions

which is contrary to nature. He must avoid all far-fetched incidents and not spoil his story by filling it with all sorts of nonsense."

On 17th December 1879 he returns to the same point again

ہم کسی سے نہیں کہ ہم نیچر کے قائل ہیں -
 نیچر - نیچر - ہا کے اندر ناول میں نیچر نہیں
 تو کچھ نہیں - - - خاک لطف
 نہیں - والدہ جو ذرا بھی کیف ہو - نرا
 ہی کرکرا ہو جائے -

"How can I make my readers understand that I believe in Nature, Nature, Nature! Alas! if one does not find Nature in a novel then it is nothing. One cannot find the least enjoyment in it, and by God what pleasure there is in it turns to ashes."

In the same strain he answers another reader's criticism by reference to European novels. A reader had written in objecting that Azād is depicted as setting off on the voyage to Turkey without it having been explained where he acquired the necessary money for it. Sarshār replies (30th August 1879):

باقی رہا دوسرا نہ اعتراض اسکا جواب
 یہ ہے کہ اول تو ناول کے ہیرو وہ
 خاص نہ رہے یا عورت جیسا ناول میں ذکر ہے
 اسے پاس فرج کہاں سے آیا پلوک کے ناول
 واٹر کے ناول یا مائٹی سرسٹو میں جیوا انگریز جان
 کے عزیز رکھنے میں فرج کی سبیل نہیں تھی اور یہ ناچار نہیں

"As for his friendly objection, I would reply that first the question where the hero of a novel gets the resources to travel is not made clear either in the novel Pickwick or in Walter's [Scott's?] novel [sic] or in Monte Cristo, which are dearer to English than life itself; and this is not impermissible."

(The second point of Sarshār's reply is not relevant here, but will be dealt with in another context.)

Later, at the end of the first volume, on 5th January 1880, we get a letter in which he explains "the plot of the novel".

میاں آزاد کا ہر شہر و دیار میں جانا واپاس کی
 سہری بڑی رسکوں پر چھلانا ناول کا عمدہ
 پلاٹ ہے

"Our friend Azād's going from city to city and country to country and expressing his anger at the evil customs which he finds there makes a fine plot for the novel."

The important question of what European influences are discernible in Fasāna i Azād is relevant to the assessment of the character of the work, and may be discussed at this point.

Chakbast tells the story that the idea of writing Fasāna i Azād was first put into Sarshār's head by a remark made by Pandit Tribhavan Nāth Hijr: "If there is any one novel of which you cannot read a single page without laughing twenty times, that novel is Don Quixote. If a tale on these lines could be written in Urdu it would be an excellent thing." Chakbast says that it was this thought which inspired Sarshār to write the zarāfat series which he later transformed into Fasāna i Azād.¹ It is doubtful whether this was in fact the case, for the early articles in this series bear very little resemblance to Don Quixote; but there is no doubt that the example of Don Quixote began to influence him as he went on with the tale. Khojī is introduced about half way through volume one, and the relationship between him and Azād acquires an increasing similarity to that of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza as the story develops.

However, while all the major elements of Don Quixote's and Sancho Panza's characters are present in Fasāna i Azād, they are differently distributed. Don Quixote is a ridiculous figure, a man who lives in a dream world and who constantly comes to grief because of his complete unawareness of current realities. But he is also a cultured man and one of high ideals for which he is prepared to suffer, and this

1. Chakbast, op.cit., pp.24-5.

quality wins our sympathy and respect even while we laugh at him. Sancho is partly a buffoon, partly an ignorant, uncultured peasant whose down-to-earth approach to life and concern for his own interests stands both in favourable and unfavourable contrast to Don Quixote's dreams - favourable because it shows the necessary awareness of realities which Don Quixote does not possess, and unfavourable because it lacks not only Don Quixote's dreams but also his idealism, so that the only deeper feeling which can over-ride his self-interest is his attachment to his master. In Fasāna i Azād the situation is different. Azād resembles Don Quixote in the sense that he has a crusade to fight, a mission to win acceptance for ideas which can regenerate society. But whereas Don Quixote's ideas are outmoded and irrelevant, Azād's are those which really do correspond to the needs of his day. Yet Sarshār never succeeds in conveying to us any real sense that Azād is prepared to make sacrifices in the service of the values in which he believes. (He is too much of the all-conquering dāstān hero for that.) And as we shall see, his character is such that one cannot feel any deep human sympathy with him. (It is Khojī who commands this sympathy, particularly by his devotion to Azād and his readiness to sacrifice himself in Azād's interests.) Khojī resembles Don Quixote in physical appearance (both are lean and lantern-jawed), in having an absurdly exaggerated idea of his own powers, and in living in a dream world, blissfully unaware

of modern realities. And both are thus a butt for ridicule, and a means through which their creator attacks the ideas of a decadent society. On the other hand Khojī resembles Sancho in general character and even on occasion in bringing Azād down to earth when his enthusiasm for the new light leads him to leave out of account the actual circumstances in which he has to work for its acceptance.

There is ample internal evidence to confirm Sarshār's acquaintance with Don Quixote. The sense of humour of the two authors is strikingly similar - at its best vigorous and full-blooded, and at its worst heavy-handed and cruel, so that in both books, the modern reader feels repelled by the thrashings and beatings which he is supposed to find amusing. But there are more detailed resemblances also. Some of Sarshār's scenes so closely resemble passages in Don Quixote that the correspondence can hardly be accidental. For example Don Quixote's Rocinante and Khojī's mount are described in very similar terms.¹

* Or take the scene described in Don Quixote's second journey (Part I, Ch.XV):

"... they halted in a meadow ... beside which ran a pleasant and refreshing brook, which invited them, or rather induced them to spend the sultry hours of midday there, ... Don Quixote and Sancho dismounted and, leaving the ass and Rocinante at large to feed on the abundant grass, they ransacked their saddle-bags. Then, without ceremony, master and

1. Don Quixote, p.77, and Fasāna i Azād, vol.I, p.359.

man ate the contents in peace and good fellowship. Now Sancho had not troubled to fetter Rocinante, secure in his belief that he was so mild and so little lustful a beast that all the mares in the pastures of Cordova would not provoke him to any impropriety. But ... there was a herd of Galician mares grazing in that valley. They belonged to some carriers from Yanguas ... Rocinante was taken with the desire to disport himself with the lady mares ... the carriers ... ran up with pack-staves, and laid into him so hard that he was soon on the ground in a very sorry state. At this point Don Quixote and Sancho, who had witnessed Rocinante's beating, ran up panting ... "

Both of them attack the carriers (Don Quixote declaring, "I am equal to a hundred"), but the carriers defend themselves with their pack-staves and stretch them senseless on the ground.

With some slight differences we find the same situation portrayed in Fasāna i Azād:

میاں آزاد اور اس کے نسلو ٹیجے یار میاں ہو ہی
 گھوڑوں کی باگ اٹھائے جد جاتے تھے - - -
 - - - - - جیت جیتے نام کے وقت آیت
 گالوں نظر آیا - میاں آزاد نے یہاں پہنچیں
 بستر ہارڈ - آج یہاں پڑاؤ ہو - - - - -
 - - - - -

- - - - - میاں شوہی نے شوہی کو
 راہ خدا پر چھوڑ دیا کہ جہاں جی
 چاہے آرا دی سے چرے۔ شوہی
 دیکھنے میں تو ڈبلی پتلی تھی۔ سورت
 حرام۔ گند انتہائی شدید۔ یہ تو اوپر
 کے کیفیت میں ہو رہے۔ وہ سیدھی
 ہلکے لوٹ کے کیفیت میں پونجی اور
 گلی چرنے۔ اتنے میں کان لے جو
 دیکھا تو لٹھے کیلر دوڑا اور بڑا
 چلا گیا تھا۔ - - - - - میاں
 شوہی ہو یا پر لٹھے تو دیکھا کہ شوہی
 معافی جاتی ہے اور پیچھے پیچھے کان کی
 مور و غل پچاتی ہے اور کان لٹھے سے چلا
 آتا ہے۔ اندازہ سے لٹھے جہاں پھر کان
 کر دوڑا دیا پھر تیسرا چلائے ہی کو تھا
 کہ میاں شوہی نے لٹھا را او تیدی کے
 او تیدی فبردار اس حرکت ناشائستہ سے باز
 آور نہ فرق دان پر ایک بال نہ رہیگا اور ضربت
 پا پوس سے ہو کھلا جائیگا۔ وہ نوار ہلا نوار کا
 لٹھے۔ عربی ترکی تو پڑھنا تھا لٹھے چلا کر
 چھینٹ پڑا اور اتنے لٹھے رسید دئے کہ شوہی
 کے پتھر پٹھے۔ - - - - - شوہی تڑپے دوڑ کر
 کراں سے لٹھے۔ وہ نوار آدی اور انتہا تیز
 یہ سنوئی اور دیکھتے ہیں آدی ہوا کے چھوٹے سے رکھائیں
 اسے آئی گردن دبوچی اور لٹھے سے زمین پر چھینکا

"Our friend Azād and his bosom companion Khojī rode on, reins in hand ... towards evening a village came in sight. Azād said, "Let us camp here for the night ..." Khojī entrusted his pony to God, to roam and graze at will. To look at, she was lean and thin and repulsive, but her unruliness knew no bounds. They settled down in the field, and she headed straight into a field of green grass and began to graze. When the peasant saw her he took his staff and came running and began to swear at her ... Khojī emerged to see his pony running off as fast as she could go, with the peasant's wife in pursuit shouting, and the peasant running with staff in hand. He landed one blow of his staff with a thud, and a second followed with full force. He was about to give her a taste of a third when Khojī roared out, "Coward! Coward! Take heed! Abandon this unseemly conduct! Otherwise I shall not spare a hair on your head, and the chastisement of my footwear will shatter your composure!" The rustic, who was as wooden as his staff, had no Arabic or Turkish learning [i.e. he could not understand such language.] He flew into a rage and leapt at the pony and landed so many blows on her that her state was piteous to see ... [Khojī] rushed at him and grappled with him. The peasant was tough and wiry, while he was a lean, emaciated man whom a strong gust of wind could have blown away. The rustic fastened his grip on his neck and threw him with a thud to the ground."

There is also a strong general similarity between Cervantes' story of fair Dorothea (Part I, Ch. XXVIII) and Sarshār's subsidiary story of Allah Rakkhī. In both cases the heroine is persuaded to fall in love with a frivolous young man who does not love her and will not marry her. Both heroines experience many adventures of a kind which rarely befell women at that time (or any time.) In the end both get married, though Allah Rakkhī is not as fortunate as Dorothea in this

respect. The stories are similar in many incidents as well as in their plot. At the beginning of the story of Dorothea she is seen sitting on the river bank weeping. Similarly Allah Rakkhī after running away from her persecutors into the jungle sits down on the banks of a river and starts to weep. She too, like Dorothea meets an old man and tells him her life story. The similarities between Khojī and Don Quixote's central characters has already been mentioned and will be discussed further in the next section.

Second only to Don Quixote one can discern the influence of Dickens' Pickwick Papers. We have already seen that this is one of the novels which Sarshār himself mentions in defending himself against a reader's criticism, and it is not surprising that he should have felt a certain kinship with Dickens. Both men started their career as journalists. Both produced their work in serial form. Both had experience of the law courts' bureaucratic procedures. Both had a strong and rather broad sense of humour. Both had an interest in observing people of different walks of life. And both had an enthusiasm for the reform of the society and used their writing as a means of preaching the reform which they desired and of ridiculing institutions and practices

of which they disapproved.¹ Azād's position, particularly in the first volume, is very like that of Pickwick, whom we see moving through the society of his day, observing and commenting upon it. In spite of the fact that Azād and Pickwick are two diverse personalities, and Azād plays very much the same role, ^{and} one sees nineteenth-century Lucknow life through his eyes. Once again the resemblance between the two books is not merely a general one. There is often a striking resemblance between the tone of the chapter openings. Thus Dickens writes of Pickwick:

"He was ... awakened by the morning sun darting his bright beams reproachfully into the apartment. Mr. Pickwick was not a sluggard, and he sprang like an ardent warrior from his tent - bedstead ... [He] ... thrust his head out of the lattice and looked around. 2

Compare this with Sarshār's opening to Fasāna i Azād.

Azād hears the cock crowing at dawn and at once responds:

-
1. The quotation from Avadh Akhbār of 5th January 1880 already given above, (p.) continues:

اور جو کہ مزاج کے پیرائے میں لکھا ہے لہذا
آئید ہے کہ ناظرین کو اس کے حق میں مفید ضرور
ہو

"... and since the result is presented in humorous form, I hope that my just readers will find it profitable."

2. Quoted in J. Hillis Miller, Charles Dickens, The World of His Novels, U.S.A. 1958, p.4.

Cambridge, Massachusetts

یہ آواز فوش آئند سنتے ہی ابللا کر
 اٹھ بیٹھے ادھر آنگھڑی ادا صر با ہمیں
 کھل گئیں۔ دیکھتے کیا ہیں ابر لو بہار
 نسیم شلبار نے غاسم شیر کو ٹھونڈ
 گلزار رسم بنا دیا ہے۔۔۔۔۔

یاب کہاں کہ مکان کے قفس
 میں قید رہیں جو کسے گل کی
 طرحے نفل گلزار کے ہو گئے

"The moment he heard this welcome sound he stirred and sat up in bed. The moment his eyes opened his mouth expanded in a broad smile. He looked out to see that the clouds of spring and the fragrant morning breeze had transformed the whole city into a beautiful garden ... [Such a man] cannot remain caged in the confines of the house. Like the fragrance of the rose he was out and abroad." 1

Allowing for differences of style, (with Sarshār, as usual in such passages, reverting to that of the dāstān) the tone is almost identical. In both books this kind of opening is often repeated as fresh adventures are described. Thus if Urdu literature is in part indebted to Cervantes for

1. Fasāna i Azād, Vol.I, p.1.

the creation, in Khojī, of one of its immortal characters, it is indebted too to Dickens for inspiring Sarshār's wonderfully lively and realistic picture of the Lucknow of his time, which makes Fasāna i Āzād so great an achievement in Urdu literature. Careful investigation would probably reveal the influence of other less reputable works of English and European literature in Fasāna i Āzād, works like those of G.W.M. Reynolds, whose voluminous sensational novels were popular in nineteenth century England and continued to be so in India long after his name had been forgotten in his own country. Azīz Ahmad is quite right in noting the close general resemblance between Reynolds' writings and the Urdu dāstān, and of the contribution which translations of his novels made to the development of the Urdu prose narrative tradition. He adds, with some exaggeration, that Reynolds is "probably the one English author whose name English students of English literature have never heard, but who in India is more widely known than any other single writer."¹

Chakbast hints at such sources when he writes:

علیٰ وہ ڈان کوٹک ڈاٹ کے مختلف
انڈریزی افسانوں کے حالات اس میں
دراچ ہیں۔ تین صنف کے قلم میں وہ
جادو ہے کہ ہر بیان کو اپنا کر لیا ہے جاننے
والے جانتے ہیں کہ فلاں داستان فسا نہ آزادی
فلاں انڈریزی ناول سے اخذ کی گئی ہو سکتا ہے نہیں کر سکتا

1. 'Azīz Ahmad, Taraqī Pasand Adab, Hyderabad, 1945, p.229.
2. Op.cit., p.26.

"Besides Don Quixote, there are various other English tales incorporated [in Fasāna i Azād]. But there is such magic in the author's pen that he has made every story his own. Those who know can see that such-and-such a story in Fasāna i Azād derives from such-and-such an English novel, but they cannot prove it."

But today it would require a great deal of research to discover exactly what these sources were. It seems likely that the stories of Venetia and Appleton, of the Princess of Poland, and of Azād Mirzā derived from European sources, the last-named, perhaps, from some tale of identical twins.

Thus Fasāna i Azād is a book made up of a number of diverse elements taken from the dāstāns, from Don Quixote, from Pickwick Papers and from sensational novels of the type written by Reynolds; and all these elements are welded together by a writer who repeatedly claims that he is writing a novel and is, in his own eyes, adding something new to Urdu literature. The extent to which these claims are justified will be discussed later.

(ii) The Main Characters

An analysis of the main characters of Fasāna i Āzād again reveals the character of the book as a combination of dāstān, didactic tale and novel. This is nowhere more clear than in the main figure of Āzād himself. The overall impression which one carries away is that of the old-style dāstān hero - handsome, courageous and highly accomplished. But when the story begins he is pictured rather differently. At this stage the intention which is uppermost in Sarshār's mind is to create a character free from the tyranny of old conventions (as the choice of name Āzād itself implies) and spurred on by a restless desire to move from place to place ridiculing everything backward and preaching the values of new light. Thus Sarshār depicts him as a man free not only of all commitment to the old order but free also of all family ties and local attachments. Indeed the words in which he is first described show him as a distinctly eccentric figure:

آپیک صاحب وضع دنیا سے نرالے بتلوں
 خانگی جائیداد عالی - کوٹ پہلا و بس کوٹ
 ڈھیلو - کھنسی ڈاڑھی - فرنگی شیشی جھاڑی
 ہاف بوٹ پہنے ٹھٹ پٹ کمرے ڈھیل
 چال چلے جاتے ہیں -

"A gentleman whose style differed from that of the world at large - khaki trousers, black jacket, yellow coat, loose-fitting waistcoat, a beard thick enough for a rabbit to hide in, striding briskly along in heavy boots." 1

Here the stress is not only on English dress (the badge of the New Light) but also upon a certain eccentricity and indifference to what people may think of him. There is the same flavour about the simile which Sarshār uses of him elsewhere:

میاں آزاد کی رگوں میں خون کے عوض
 پارہ کوٹ کوٹ کر بھرا تھا - پھر آیب
 جگہ اٹھو جین تہاں کبھی اس محلے میں کبھی
 اس محلے میں چوں طرف باؤ کے کتے کی طرح
 گھومتے پھرتے تھے -

"In our friend Azād's veins flowed not blood but mercury. So how could he be happy in one place? Now in this quarter, now in that, he roved around in all directions like a mad dog." 2

It is not until Husn Arā is introduced, and with her the atmosphere of the dāstān, that Azād is suddenly transformed into a handsome, dashing young gallant. Husn Arā's trusted old servant describes him to her as:

عورت شہزادوں کی لہرت، فرشتوں کی
 وضع بھلے عالموں کی تیرا بلسن دیکھ

1. Vol.I, p.1.

2. Vol.I, p.273.

"... handsome as a Prince and virtuous as an angel; the style of a gentleman, but with a gallant air too." 1

From this point up to the time of his triumphal return from the wars Azād's role as social reformer takes second place to his role as dāstān hero, although he does continue his preaching of the New Light at the same time. But by this time a new element also has made its appearance, and Sarshār, with an only half-conscious realism, has begun to portray Azād as a character possessing not only the admirable characteristics with which he had intended to endow him, but also many of the much less admirable qualities which did in fact characterise many of the real-life supporters of the New Light in Sarshār's time. Among them were many men born in aristocratic families and enjoying a comfortable standard of living, who wanted to throw off the irksome restrictions of the old social conventions but had not yet assimilated any new, really firm guiding principles in social life to take their place. Thus they tended to seize upon the freedom which the new values approved without in practice accepting the social responsibilities which should have accompanied it. Many of Azād's more unattractive qualities derive from this sort of situation, though it is only fair to add that the dāstān tradition, in which the great hero is tacitly allowed a good deal of somewhat

1. Vol. I, pp.296-7.

"If I wanted to I could have loads and loads of wives." 1

Quite early in the first volume, shortly after delivering a long lecture on the evils of the old decadent way of life, he goes to see dancing girls performing, immediately becomes infatuated with one of them, and behaves as if he has lost his mental balance. When he goes to deliver the old man's letter to his young wife, he loses his heart to her too, and it apparently never occurs to him that there is anything dishonourable in pressing his attentions on her. Later on when she leaves her home and goes to live in an inn as Bhatiārī Allah Rakkhī, Azād not only flirts with her but gives her to understand that he will marry her; then when she presses him to do so, he eludes her and runs away. Even on the battlefield when Clarissa comes to fight against him he behaves like a fool. Instead of fighting, he kisses her whenever he gets the chance, and in the end is taken prisoner. After being kidnapped by the Princess of Poland he refuses to marry her because of his promise to Ḥusn Arā, but when a slave girl brings a message from the princess he wants to kiss her, and when she refuses he tries to justify himself by saying:

ہو لائیں تو فقط آزما تا تھا

"Of course, I was only testing you." 3

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1. Vol.II, p.401.
 2. Vol.I, p.10.
 3. Vol.III, p.644.

- although it is quite clear to the reader that this was not the case at all. When Maida and Clarissa come disguised as men and the princess who is holding Azād captive falls in love with them, he gets very angry and jealous. Although the princess has now lost interest in him, and he is free to go if he wishes to, he rejects Khojī's suggestion that they should go, and later when the Princess discovers that the two young "men" are really women and decides to marry Azād after all, Azād is overjoyed.¹ Even if one makes the excuse for Azād that all this happens at a time when he is thousands of miles away from Husn Arā and has been parted from her for many months, this does not cover his conduct before he is out of India, in making improper advances to Husn Arā's own cousin in Bombay. Many other incidents could be quoted, for Azād's character hardly changes in this respect from start to finish, and even in volume four there are episodes of this kind. One can only echo the words of Pandit Kishan Parshād Kaul:

یہ تو نہیں کہ اس قماش کے لوگ ہوتے
 نہیں - یہ اثرات ہوتے ہیں لیکن بیرو
 دوسری آب و ہوا کے پینے ہوئے ہوتے
 ہیں اس سہولتی مٹی کے نہیں

1. cf. Vol.III, p.835 & 840.

"It is not that people of this kind do not exist. They do, and in abundance. But heroes are made of other ingredients, not of this ordinary clay." 1

Other aspects of Azād's character are equally offensive to anyone of ordinary moral sense. Early in the story when Azād becomes attached to the Nawāb's court, Sarshār paints a vivid picture of the Nawāb's stupidity and of the way in which his unscrupulous courtiers exploit this to their advantage. Yet Azād himself is shown as exploiting the Nawāb just as unscrupulously. Later on he solves his financial problems by cheating a moneylender, and Sarshār himself shows that he sees nothing objectionable in this when he replies to a reader's criticism in Avadh Akhbār. The reader had objected that Sarshār had shown Azād setting off for Turkey without showing how he had acquired the necessary resources. Sarshār replies with two arguments, the first of which has already been quoted in section (i). As his second argument he continues:

علاوہ بریں ظاہر ہے کہ میاں آزاد نے اپنی
سہا جن سے چلے کر کے تئی ہزار اشرقیال
اڑائی تھیں اور میاں طرف کی بیوی کے پاس
بجفا ملت رکھ ہیوڑا تھا۔ وہ اتنے پاس
ہی تھیں اب تھیں میاں آزاد رفعت ہوتے
وقت اشرقیال پائی تھیں تو اتھا د کر کیوں نہیں کیا
تھا۔ سب سے ڈاکوؤں اور اٹھا تھیں دل سے ڈاکو رہتا۔ اس لئے ہے

1. Adabī Aur Qaumī Tazkire, Aligarh, 1955, pp.28-9.

آزاد کے ساتھ ساتھ، آزاد کے خیال کے بارے میں
 "In addition to this, as you know, our friend Azād had cheated a money-lender out of several thousand gold coins and handed them over to Miyān Zarāf's wife to keep for him. If when Azād set out he reclaimed this money, why did I not mention it? I will tell you: I was afraid that he would be in danger from robbers and pickpockets; so I said to myself, 'It is better to let Azād take the money away without saying anything.'"¹

Azād's attitude towards his friends is even more objectionable. He does his best to make Allah Rakkhī fall in love with him, and succeeds in doing so; but then he loses interest and deserts her. Later, when he is told that she has become a jogan his only response is:

ہاں ہو سکتی

"Yes, no doubt."²

Khojī, who never wavers in his loyalty to Azād, is more than once treated extremely shabbily. Thus Azād abandons him in Alexandria when he is extremely ill and goes on to Turkey alone. Khojī recovers and when after great difficulty he makes his way to rejoin Azād, he satisfies his vanity by giving it out that he is Azād's father. Azād hears of this and is furious. He says:

وہ سو رہا ہے کہ وہ میرا باپ ہے۔ فائدہ زیادہ سخرہ
 بد معاش

1. Avadh Akhbār, 30th August 1879.
 2. Vol.II, p.453.

"The pig is my slave and his father was my father's slave. Buffoon! scoundrel!" 1

When he, Khojī, Maida and Clarissa are about to escape, they are faced with the situation that they have only three horses between the four of them. The following exchange then takes place:

خوجی سرے تو ہم۔ اسے یا راب ہم لیا کریں بہائی
 آزاد۔ خدا حافظ ہے۔ اب تو زیادہ بت بت نہیں کر سکتی
 خوجی تھا اس سر زمین سے لپرد لیا۔ اب
 اس وقت لیا ہو سکتا۔ اگر زندگی ہے تو
 لڑھکتے ہو مجھے پر نہ ہی تب آ جانا۔ ورنہ
 خیر تمہیں اختیار ہے۔

Khojī: I am odd man out. What shall I do now?

Azād : Yes, it's goodbye. I can't go on chattering to you now. I must leave you here in this land. What can be done now? If you live you can stagger back to Hurmuz Jī. Otherwise - well, it is up to you." 2

Azād not only leaves Khojī; he forgets all about him. When he meets a man who could have been expected to have news of Khojī, Azād never even thinks to enquire after him. When his English friend Appleton asks him about this he replies:

1. Vol.III, p.209.

2. Vol.III, p.773.

اے۔ لاءول ولاقوة اور سہل باتیں
 پوچھیں نگر یہ پوچھنا معمول آئے۔ مہلائے
 دریافت کر لوں یاد ہی نہ رہا۔

"Good God! I asked about everything else, but I quite forgot to ask about him. I must send for him and ask him. It slipped my mind altogether." 1

After their return to India Khojī disappears with a woman whom he believes to be his ideal beloved Bī Shitāb Jān. She doses him with opium in such quantities that he nearly dies. Azād is quite indifferent to his plight, and in the end it is not Azād who gives him shelter but the simple nawab in whose service we first met him in volume one.

It is only to Husn Arā that, in general, Azād remains constant, and even here one feels that this is mainly because the challenge which she presents to him appeals to the adventurer in him. She is the one woman who for the moment is beyond his reach, and in order to win her he has to go to the wars and risk his life. This combination of adventure and romance acts as a spur to him, and it is not surprising that he rejects Khojī's suggestion that he should persuade Husn Arā to waive her condition by picturing to her all the dangers involved in going to the wars. Despite his genuine courage, his heroic acts are often motivated in part

1. Vol.III, p.1050.

by vanity and a desire for the admiration of others. All in all, although Azād is Sarshār's hero, he does not succeed in presenting him in a very attractive light. We know that Sarshār himself was uneasily aware of this, for he writes in Avadh Akhbār (5th January 1880) admitting that in the early part of the story Azād had some undesirable qualities, but claiming that his love for Husn Arā purified him of them. Chakbast accepts this argument, adding only that the sudden change is unnatural and unconvincing,¹ but 'Alī 'Abbās Husainī is right when he points out that no such drastic change in Azād's character is in fact evident.²

Sarshār also faced difficult problems in creating the character of his heroine Husn Arā. She was intended to represent the female counterpart of Azād, a modern woman who had discarded the old outworn conventions and accepted the new values, including a new conception of women's role in society. As we have seen, Sarshār's ideas on this subject are very much in advance of those of his contemporaries, not excluding those who were supporters of the New Light. In fact it is striking feature of Sir Sayyid and of the great majority of his supporters that their ideas on the place of women in society are almost entirely traditional. For example, they fully support the system of purdah, and though some of

1. op.cit., p.32.

2. Nāval Kī Tārīkh aur Tanqīd, Lucknow, n.d. p.232.

them are in favour of the education of women, they are at pains to ensure that this education shall be given in conditions of seclusion and see as its object the equipping of the woman to be a more adequate companion to her husband. Sarshār's views are much more radical. He is opposed to purdah and believes that a woman in her own right is entitled to receive the same education and attain to the same cultural standard as a man. He therefore set out to depict Husn Arā as such a woman. The great problem was how to make such a woman acceptable and attractive to his readers. Up to a point Sarshār solves the problem quite successfully by equipping Husn Arā with a wonderful combination of the qualities both of the old dāstān heroine and of the new style heroine of such books as Nazīr Aḥmad's Mir'at ul 'Arūs and Banāt un N'ash, which had been published a few years earlier. When Husn Arā and her sister are first introduced into the story they are described as follows:

کوئی تیرہ تیرہ چودہ برس کی ہوئی بس اور کیا۔
 شریف زادیاں۔ رئیس زادیاں ہیں بڑی تخیل دار
 بڑی سلیقہ شعار۔ بڑی خوش فکر۔۔۔ آتمسوا
 میں نرم۔ مزاج میں آزر م۔ رویوش عفت
 خوش۔ میا پرور۔ پاک نظر۔ ناز و لغم پروردہ
 بگڑھواندہ۔۔۔ دونوں بہنوں کو مطالعہ
 کتب کا از بس شوق ہے پڑھنے لکھنے اور
 سیر دریا اور غلشت میں گھومنا اور کوئی کام
 نہیں۔ اصغری آبروی کا قہر ابھی وہی درازہ المورس

اور ثبات النفس اور فاضل حاد اور نترک ہر مہنی
 اور عملی بہن اور اخلاقی کما نشی وغیرہ لکھنے کو تصنیف
 مطالعہ میں رہتی ہیں اور ان لوگوں کے گھر پر ہفتی میں سینے
 پر رونے اور کاٹھ پھینکے میں بھی دل لوں بہنیں ہر
 ہیں گھانا بھی خوب لکھا لیتی ہیں

"They cannot be more than about thirteen to fourteen years old - girls of good family and high social standing, extremely sensible, capable and imaginative [whatever this may be intended to mean], with modesty in their glance and mildness in their disposition. They veil their beauty, treasure their chastity and nurture their sense of shame. Though reared in every luxury they are well educated ... both sisters are as fond of reading as can be. Reading, writing, outings on the river and walks in the gardens - these are their sole occupations. They are always reading the story of Asgharī and Akbarī - what's it called? - Mir'at ul 'Arūs and Banātun N'ash - and Fasāna i Hāmīd and Tuzak i Jarmanī and 'Alī Band and Akhilāq-i-Kāshī and all those other new books, and they really take them to heart. Both sisters are experts at needlework and embroidery, and both are excellent cooks." 1

Here the stress is mainly upon the ideal qualities in a woman destined to be the life-partner of the gentleman who has embraced the new light, but Sarshār loses no time in making it clear that they possess also all the charms of the dāstān heroine, Husn Arā in particular being a girl of matchless beauty and astounding cultural accomplishments, including amongst other things a thorough knowledge and

1. Vol.I, p.265.

appreciation of Persian literature, and great skill at chess. But in following the dāstān tradition Sarshār was entering upon dangerous ground, for the alluring women of the dāstān were infidels and enchantresses modelled in point of fact upon the beautiful real-life courtesans of Lucknow - and Sarshār could hardly model the Islamic, new light heroine of his tale upon the courtesan. Yet he faced a real difficulty here. He wanted to depict a heroine who had all the educational and cultural accomplishments of men and moved freely and easily in their society, because this was his ideal of womanhood. But the only women in the society of his day who had these characteristics were the courtesans. It is quite clear that Sarshār's half-conscious realism led him in the earlier part of the story to draw upon his knowledge of the Lucknow courtesan in portraying Husn Arā and her sister, perhaps without even realising that he was doing so. When Husn Arā and her sister are first introduced the resemblance to the courtesan is quite unmistakable. The fact that they go out riding and boating escorted only by an old manservant, and that people gather to admire their beauty is evidence enough, but the effect is even more overwhelming when Sarshār portrays their meeting and their conversation with their prospective suitors in the scene where these, together with Azād, are submitted to an examination. We noted earlier that the content of this examination relates

entirely to the old culture and has nothing to do with the new values of which the two sisters are supposed to be the embodiment. But even more striking than this is the whole tone of their conversation - the utter lack of the traditional modesty of Indian women, and the very free (not to say brazen) use of wit and sarcasm at their suitors expense. An early meeting between Azād and Husn Arā conjures up the same atmosphere.

حُسن آرا نے اپنے دست نازک سے ایک تھوڑی
 بناٹی اور اپنے ہی ہاتھ سے میاں آزاد کو
 کھلائی۔ اہو ہو ہو ہو سیر آرابولی لو
 میاں آزاد لقمہ ہم لیا سیر میاں آزاد
 نے پانڈان چھین کر ایک تھوڑی
 خود بناٹی اور ہزاروں قسمیں دیکر
 اپنی مطلوبہ مطبوعہ کو اپنے ہاتھ سے
 کھلائی۔

"Husn Arā with her own delicate hand rolled a pān, and with her own hand put it into Azād's mouth. What bliss was his! 'There, Miyān Azād', said Sihpahr Arā, 'You've made a hit.' At this Miyān Azād snatched the pān-box from her, himself rolled a pān, and adjuring her by a thousand oaths, put the pān with his own hands into his sweet beloved's mouth." 1

At this same stage of the story an accident occurs when they are out boating together, and Azād saves Sihpahr

1. Vol.I, p.336.

Arā's life. After the rescue the three of them go off together and stay for some days in a bungalow by the river. This could not go on, for however much the courtesan was in fact accepted as a normal part of Lucknow life, no-one could publicly take any other attitude towards her than that of strong moral disapproval. The columns of Avadh Akhbār show that readers were not slow to object to Sarshār's portrayal of his heroine. Possibly none of them were so rude as to suggest that Sarshār was portraying a courtesan; at any rate no such letter was printed in the paper. But the way in which Sarshār speedily modifies his portrayal is in itself evidence of the pressure which the reaction of his readers exerted upon him.

In one respect his critics were on firm ground. An author who repeatedly stressed his adherence to realism could hardly defend himself against the charge that no respectable lady of his day behaved in the way he had shown Husn Arā behaving. Thus a reader complains in a letter published in Avadh Akhbār on 12th December 1879:

حسن آرا کو آپنے بالکل اپنے مذاق کے
مطابق بنا لیا ہے وہ تو فال کو چھوڑ کر
دعا کو بھی نہیں مانتی کیا انگریزی
بھی پڑھی ہے۔ نہیں تو یہ بات دہی
بارہ حاصل ہوئی یا محبت سے یا پڑھنے
کے اثر سے۔ محبت انلو کسی ایسے

کی کہیاں رہتی ہو آنٹریبری فیال اتے
 سچو ہاش - اور تعلیم تو فارسی ہوئی ہے
 تو پھر کہاں سے ال کی قابل ہیں رہی ہیں۔

"You have created Husn Arā in entire conformity to your own tastes. Let alone omens, she does not even believe in the effect of special prayer. Has she had an English education? If not, then there are only two ways in which she can have reached this position - either under the influence of the company she keeps or under the influence of books she has read. How could she have had the company of anyone who had embraced English ideas? And her education was in Persian; so how can it be that she does not believe in omens?"

It is noteworthy that in his reply Sarshār answers other points raised in the same letter but keeps silent on this point. He had already attempted a very lame and unconvincing rejoinder to this kind of criticism on 13th October 1879:

بھاری دلی خواہش ہے کہ اسی درستان
 میں کسی فاضل آدمی یا خاں توں یا
 خاں بات کا ذکر نہ کریں بلکہ عام طور
 پر موسم مزد موسم اور فیالات، سفر کا خاکہ
 آڑا میں تاکہ اصحاب حق ان امور پر بخور
 فرمائیں اور راہ راست پر آئیں - تمہیں
 ہے حسن آرا اور بہار آرا ہی دعویں وہ
 میں خاتون کہیں رہتی ہوں۔۔۔

"My real desire in this tale is not to speak of any particular person or particular community or particular incident, but in a general way to caricature undesirable conventions and harmful ideas so that men who can discern the truth may give thought to these matters and come on to the right road.... It is possible that two beautiful moon-browed sisters may exist somewhere...."

In other words Sarshār tacitly admits that where necessary he sacrifices realism to his didactic purpose. One can feel some sympathy with Chakbast's caustic comment:

مسلمانوں میں ایسی دو صدمی
 کتاب ایسی آزادی پسند کتاب
 پیدا نہیں ہو سکتی

"Amongst the Muslims there is no possibility of so emancipated a woman being born for another two hundred years." 1

Unfortunately Sarshār could not be consistent even in portraying an imaginary ideal woman, for the majority of his readers were very far from being in the position where they could regard such a woman as a heroine. Their taste demanded a heroine more in accord with their own ideas of a respectable purdah lady, and as the story progresses Sarshār more and more gives them what they want. In the early stages she is shown as a girl who despite her traditional education is as firm an adherent of the new light as Azād himself. She believes that a girl should have the freedom not only to

1. op.cit., p.32.

choose her own husband¹ but also to get to know a man well before deciding whether to marry him. When she has decided to choose Azād she expresses her love for him and discusses love and marriage freely and without embarrassment. Yet as soon as Azād leaves her to set off for Turkey her character changes completely. We no longer see her going out boating or moving freely in mixed society. Later on she reacts to Humāyūn Far's advances as the traditional purdah girl would, with shock and fear, and in general, except for the continuing stress upon her cultural accomplishment, she comes more and more to resemble the respectable purdah woman.

Even in adding to these qualities the new features which the supporters of the new light wish to see in their women folk, Sarshār produces a picture which is not a very happy one. In this aspect she emerges, like Nazīr Ahmad's Asgharī, as an unattractively hard and calculating person. Thus when Azād first pays court to her she lays down the conditions on which she is prepared to accept him as

a suitor:

۱۔ پندار غمگین در آن ایام
 شادمانه بود تا آنکه اس صحبت
 سے ایسا نام ہو اور گوشت آبلو
 ما سے کہ آپ بھی کوئی ہیں
 ط کوئی عمدہ اور خوش بے با
 کو بھی آرا پر نہیں۔ مگر کہ راہ

1. Sarshār also had in mind here the ancient Indian institution of the svayamvara.

اور اسکو نکالتے سے ارا اللہ کیجئے
 نا آگے لوگ سمجھیں کہ خوش سلیبہ
 آ رہی ہیں اور روٹیوں کے محتاج
 نہیں ہیں۔

پہلے شریف زادوں رئیس زادوں علماء
 عقلا اور شہزادوں کے سوا کسی اور کے
 سے عظمت نہ کرنا چاہئے۔ شہزادوں اور
 بد سہا مشوروں کو نہ آنے دیجئے

پہلے نماز فجر پڑھنے کیلئے ہر بار مسجد جایا
 کرو۔ جو لوگ سلطانیہ نہ سمجھیں کہ پابند عزم
 صلوات نہیں لائے مذہب آدمی کوئی اچھا
 نہیں ہے۔ ہوشیاریا لات چاہئے جو ہوں نہیں
 دیکھا پر شہزادوں کی قدر ضروری ہے
 یہ ایک سواری رکھئے اور صبح شام
 چلنا چاہئے۔

ان اہل جان سے کئی شہزادوں کو ملائیے

" (1) Every fortnight you must hold a mushā'ira at your house. This will bring you a measure of fame, and people will come to understand that you too are somebody.

(2) Rent a fine handsome bungalow, and make sure that it overlooks the main road.

Furnish it elegantly so that people will understand that you are a man of taste who does not want for anything he needs.

(3) Associate only with gentlemen and persons of good social standing, with scholars, literary men and poets. Do not allow nonentities and riffraff and scoundrels to come anywhere near you.

(4) Go every Friday without fail to the mosque for the Congregational Prayers, so

that no Muslim can say that you are lax in your religious observances. Nobody thinks well of an irreligious man. Privately you may think what you please, but a measure of regard for appearances and for what the world thinks is essential.

(5) You must keep a carriage and drive out in it to take the air every morning and evening.

(6) You must visit my grandmother from time to time." 1

The same consideration is uppermost in her mind when, having accepted Azād as her future husband, she sends him off to fight the Russians:

تو سننے اب روم و روس میں جنگ
 چھڑنیوالی ہے آپ پر فرس ہے آپ
 روم کی طرف سے لڑنے اور بیخ
 سات کے غروب جو ہر دکھائے گئے
 شہا کے پورے واپس آئے تو وہ نام
 پہلے پہلے سالانہ کھربان کھربان آئے
 ہوا چرچے بھول اور ہم فخر سے ہیں
 کہ یہاں آزاد غازی ہمارے شوہر
 ہیں

"Listen, then. War is brewing between the Turks and the Russians, and it is your duty to go to the aid of the Turks. Go to Turkey and fight on their side. Let your good sword show its mettle, and return with a row of medals hanging at your breast. Your fame throughout India will be such that in every

home people will sing your praises and I shall be able to say with pride that the warrior Azād is my husband." 1

In short Ḥusn Arā emerges as a composite character made up of the incongruous elements of the as yet unknown emancipated woman of Sarshār's ideal, the dāstān heroine, the courtesan, and the hard and calculating housewife. Nor do these elements appear successively. In particular, Sarshār was so eager to portray his ideal woman that flashes of emancipated behaviour continue to appear from time to time throughout the story. The one feature of Ḥusn Arā's character which strikes one both as admirable and as convincingly drawn is her strength of character and her loyalty to Azād. This emerges most clearly when she resists every form of pressure to break her promise to marry him, and marry her cousin instead.

Sihpahr Arā is more consistently drawn and is a more sympathetic figure than her sister. There is nothing hard or calculating about her, and her open-heartedness and simplicity wins a place for her in our regard which Ḥusn Arā never gains. She loves Azād like a sister and does not care about his social standing. She has not only more regard for him, but greater confidence in him also. She tries to persuade Ḥusn Arā not to send him off to the wars. When a rumour reaches them that Azād has married another woman,

1. Vol. I, p.337.

Ḥusn Arā is half inclined to believe it, but she is quite certain that it must be false. Her love for her elder sister is exemplary, and she shares fully in all her joys and sorrows. Her love for Humāyūn Far shows the same charming innocence and simplicity, and it is unfortunate that Sarshār spoils the story by introducing the far-fetched and apparently supernatural incidents which he does.

Another more fully-drawn female character is Allah Rakkhī, whose adventures form a sub-plot running throughout the book. In the earlier part of the story Sarshār involves her in such manifold transformations, and describes these sudden changes so unconvincingly that one is left with no worthwhile impressions, but as the story continues the constancy of her love for Āzād and the courage with which she faces all her misfortunes give her a certain dignity which develops most fully in the last volume. Having waited long and patiently for Āzād, she has at last given up all hope that he will return to her and has married a nawab. When the returning hero is cheap enough to make advances to her she rejects them with a quiet dignity which commands all our respect.

The other women characters do not call for any detailed discussion. Maida and Clarissa are of importance only because we see in them Sarshār's concept of the modern European woman. But they are little more than the

embodiment of certain good qualities - sincerity, loyalty, dignity and culture - and never make a very profound impression. Certainly there is nothing about their character which is distinctively European, and this is not surprising, for Sarshār did not possess the intimate knowledge of European life which the creation of really living characters demands.

With some of the minor Indian woman characters he achieves much greater success, particularly in cases where he feels no compulsion to create them as the embodiment of this or that virtue or vice and so can allow his natural talent for realistic portrayal full rein. Thus Bahārūn Nisā Begam, Ḥusn Arā's scheming cousin, is a most convincing character. She is a typical daughter of an aristocratic family, spoiled, vain, petulant and quarrelsome, interested only in expensive clothes and jewellery and in trying to organise other people's lives for them. Ḥusn Arā's old grandmother is another well-portrayed character. She very rarely comes into the foreground, but Sarshār succeeds in conveying very well the sense that she is the matriarch of the family, everywhere making her influence felt and directing the course of events from behind the scenes.

Sarshār is equally successful in the portrayal of the young maid-servants of the aristocratic families and evokes very well the atmosphere of these families where the

maid-servant is often the object of the master's amorous attentions and takes full advantage of the opportunities which this gives her.

Among the minor male characters only two deserve special mention. The first is the ignorant superstitious and gullible Nawab into whose service Āzād enters at the beginning of the story. Despite all his weaknesses he appears as a sympathetic character, essentially simple, unaffected and generous, so that his sense of his responsibility to those who are dependent on him never fails despite the wholesale exploitation of his goodness which they practice. As we have seen, it is he and not Āzād who looks after Khojī in his need in the last volume of the book.

The other is Humāyūn Far. In him we get a picture of the young man of noble family who, although living in the traditional style of a Lucknow gentleman, has accepted the new light. We see him attending lectures on the evils of superstitiousⁿ and similar themes, and when Husn Ārā is seriously ill it is he who insists upon a doctor trained in Western medicine being called to attend her to the great annoyance of the traditional Hakīm who had begun to treat her. His friends and associates are sensible and self-respecting men very different from the cheats and flatterers who attend upon the Nawab, and we never see any indication in his conduct of the decadence and sensuality so widely prevalent in the Lucknow aristocracy. Unlike Āzād, he is not

an ardent propagandist of the new light, but he is free also of Azād's less admirable traits, and is as a result a rather more effective advertisement for the new light than Azād himself.

In fact there is a whole range of minor characters, men and women alike, who are excellently drawn. Flattering courtiers, gullible nawabs, pompous maulvis, struggling young lawyers and sinister young bloods of good family like the Shahsawār and Azād Mirzā who pass their lives in the borderlands between aristocratic society and the criminal world. And all of these add colour and conviction to the background against which the more unreal major characters move.

The one major character in the whole story in which Sarshār achieves real success is that of Khojī. It is interesting to trace the stages in the development of Sarshār's own conception of this character. He clearly felt the need at the very outset of a character to be the butt of Azād's ridicule, a character which would embody all the things that Sarshār wished to attack. For this reason, in the very first chapter he introduces a young man whom he calls Chammī Jān. He is a man young in years but completely traditional in his ways and quite impervious to any modern argument. But Sarshār clearly felt dissatisfied with Chammī Jān, and after the first few chapters he disappears from the story. A little later Khojī appears on the scene. He is first

introduced in the setting of the Nawāb's court, where he is depicted as an emaciated pigmy of a man, hopelessly addicted to opium. He is already nearly seventy years old and acts a sort of buffoon and as a target for the ridicule of his fellow-courtiers. We are given the impression that this role is his only source of livelihood, and he brings to it a certain impudence and quickness of repartee which often serve to get him out of awkward situations. Sarshār portrays the Nawāb's courtiers as men who live by shamelessly exploiting his simplicity, and Khojī seems at this stage to serve the purpose of bringing comic relief to a rather unsavoury picture; for while he is himself a courtier and lives in basically the same way as his fellow-courtiers, his antics cannot help making us laugh and his occasional success in turning the tables on those who try to ridicule him gives us a certain satisfaction. In an early scene we see another courtier trying to make a fool of him by asking him a trick question:

سختا اے باپ تمہارے کون ہو گئے ؟
 راہ الہیں کونسی بات ہے - بھلا ہو گئے
 کون باپ ہو گئے - اچھے رہو اب نہیں
 ایسا کھالڑا لہجہ لیا ہے - مجھے کونسی گنوار
 سقرہ رابیا ہے - تو اب صاحب نے کیا
 سوچی سوچ میں نہاؤ تو ہائیں - اتنی

انعام دو گنا - پیرو نہ نہدا شرفیاں تو
 حضور کی جو نیوں کے صدقہ میں بہت مل
 جائیگی - راز چہرہ بنا دو چہرہ ہو جائیگا - وہ نہ
 سوئے نہ لہی - کلتا جٹے بڑے احوال
 ناصعب کچھ تو کوئی فی غوطہ آیب
 الترفی دے تو کھی یا بی بن نہ پھول
 پانی کی صورت دیکھو بدن جانب
 اچھتا ہے - روح لرزے گلتی ہے -
 مہنی واہ کیے برد و گئے ہو ہی

میاں بنا کے نہیں
 تو کوئی آپ قاضی ہیں ہم نہیں
 ہاتھ چہرہ آپ کو کیا - ابھی کہہ جا
 کا حکم ہے - جلد آئی بلا
 کہنے لگے کہہ کا حکم ہے چہرہ کوئی
 جان دیدے -

حضور یہ اس وقت دھم سے نہ کو دپڑیں
 تو اغم نہ لے -

اب بہت چل لگے ہیں - کھائیں ہم
 کھلائیں حضور اڑ لگے برس سے تو عیاں
 اغم کھاتا آیا ہوں اب آپ کے کہنے
 سے کچھ نہ ڈول -

Courtier: "What relation was your father to you?"

Khojī: What a question! What's difficult about that? What relation was he to me? My father of course! You've got a nerve! I suppose you think me a proper clod-hopper. You've written me off as a rustic.

Nawwāb: Khojī, I'm willing to bet you won't go and take a dip. I'll give you a sovereign if you do.

Khojī: Lord and master, ^{your} great kindness will bring your humble servant sovereigns enough, but if I once take a dip life will become a burden to me. 'When your nose is cut off your life is spared, but it is a miserable life.' No Sir, you may give me a sovereign for every plunge I take and I still won't do it. The sight of water makes me tremble all over and my spirit swoons.

Courtier: Lord! what a creature you are! Don't you ever bath?

Khojī: And who are you to ask? Are you a qāzī or something? Suppose I don't. What is it to you?

Courtier: My good fellow, His Lordship has commanded you.

Khojī: Well, what's it to you that his lordship has commanded me? Does a man wash his hands of life so easily?

Courtier: My Lord, if he doesn't jump in right away you should stop his opium.

Khojī: You've grown very bold, haven't you? That's a matter for his Lordship and me. I've been eating opium for sixty-eight years. Do you think I'm going to give it up now because you say so?" 1

A page or two later he shows that he can make a joke even at his own expense:

هو اچر صاحب لوگ آپے پدر بزرگوار کو
 باور ہی بتاتے ہیں۔ والہم ہم تو آپ کو شریف
 زادہ سمجھتے تھے۔ مگر آپ یاچی ہی تھے
 ہو ہی۔ یاچی آپ اور آپے باپ آپ
 بیدھے تو نہیں ہو۔ یہ یاچی کی نونسی
 بات چیت ہے۔ ہم نے تو کچھ کچھ چوئے ہیں
 چھوئے باپ دادا کا حال معلوم نہیں کون
 کئے کون نہیں تھے۔

"Courtier: Khwaja Sāhab, people say that your revered father was a cook. By God, we were thinking all the time that you were a gentleman, and now it turns out that you were nothing but an oaf.

Khojī: Oaf yourself, and son of an oaf! Do you know what you're about? What sort of a way is that to talk? All I know is that I've never blown the fire all my life. I can't speak for my father and his father." 1

However, there is more sense in Khojī's clowning than he lets us see. He knows that it is to his advantage to be thought a fool, for it flatters the vanity of his patron and his fellow-courtiers and makes his own path easier. But occasionally he lets us see that he is not such a fool as he makes out. When the Nawāb is lamenting

the loss of his quail one of the courtiers, to demonstrate the depth of his grief, quotes a verse which he attributes to Atish when it is in fact one of Ş'adī's. Khojī cannot tolerate this display of ignorance and interrupts to correct him. The courtiers and the Nawāb himself round on him and try to take him down a peg by making him write down the words

ہوشی رعواس Khojī does so and, as expected, mis-spells them. But even then he is quick enough to get himself out of his difficulty. He says:

ہو جی - حضور کے نزاج میں الفاظ تو ضرور
 ہے - سین برب بعد اس وقت حضور نے میری
 گردن کندھ پر عیب ریتی ہائے ہائے انا
 تو سمجھے کہ اگر ہوشی رعواس محققا نے ہو تو
 تو پیش پا افتادہ الفاظ سے اہلا ہیں
 مجلا کیوں غلطی کرتے - شاعر ہیں نثار
 ہیں - مولوی ہیں منشی ہیں - سکر
 جب ہوشی ہیں بھی ہیں - ہائے
 صف شکن کا پتہ نہ ملے اور ہم
 ناما پختیاں اُڑائیں -

"Your lordship is kindness itself, but by the God of the K'aba, this time you have treated me with gross unfairness. Alas! Alas! Do you not see? If my senses were about me I would never have mis-spelled so straightforward a phrase. I am a poet,

a litterateur, a maulvi, a man of letters - but only when my senses are about me. Alas! when Safshikan [the name of the quail] is lost how can I feel at ease?" 1

This answer pleases the Nawāb so much that he gives orders for Khojī to be rewarded.

As the story progresses Khojī is shown to be capable of more sustained shrewdness. When he and Azād are making their way to Bombay on the first stage of their travels, they stay with another Nawāb. The Nawāb's steward is a dishonest man who regularly cheats his master by presenting bills for larger sums than he has actually spent and pocketing the difference himself. Khojī finds him out in this, and as the price of his silence demands a share in the steward's illegal gains. The steward has no alternative but to agree, but on one occasion Khojī angers him so much that he gives him a good thrashing. The Nawāb hears of this and questions him about it. Khojī quite boldly denies it:

هو ہجی - نہیں حضور شریفوں میں ہیں
 یا تھا پانی ہو تی ہے مجھلا - لیکن آتا
 لگا را انھوں نے لکھو ٹھانٹا - لکھو لکھو
 توں توں تکر رہ گئے مجھے ماس پیر یا محمد
 اٹھا نا کوئی دل گئی ہے اور پھر شریف
 ہیں بٹ سہر آئے ہیں

"No, your lordship. Do gentlemen ever come to blows? I ask you! I challenged him: he rebuked me. We squared up to each other, but it went no further than that. Is it a joking matter to raise one's hand against a gentleman? And would a gentleman take a thrashing and lie down under it?" 1

In the end the steward has to accept his defeat. He says ruefully to himself:

اچھے ملے - ہم سمجھتے تھے کہ بس
 ہم ہی ہم ہیں - گنہگار نے بھی
 سیر و نقل - جب دیکھو سا اچھے کو
 تیار -

"A fine thing! I thought I was the only one, but here is one who can teach even me a thing or two. Every time you look round he is there waiting for his share." 2

Khojī by this time has become Azād's trusty squire and companion, and we begin to see the influences both of Dāstāni Amīr Hamza and Don Quixote. In Khojī, Sarshār has blended qualities drawn partly from 'Amar, partly from Don Quixote, and partly from Sancho, and though he has fused them so well and added so much of his own to the picture that Khojī becomes a consistent, living character in his own right, it is worthwhile noting the resemblances and differences between him and his three prototypes.

1. Vol.I, p.466.
 2. Vol.I, p.467.

Like 'Amar (and like Sancho), Khojī is the devoted henchman of his hero. Like 'Amar, he is lean and ugly, but 'Amar is a great lanky man while Khojī is an undersized weakling. Like 'Amar (and Sancho and Don Quixote), he provides comic relief, but in 'Amar's case it is the discomfiture of his enemies that makes us laugh, while in Khojī's case (as in those of Don Quixote and of Sancho) it is his own discomfiture that provides the comedy. 'Amar is a master of disguise, and a man of ready wit and great diplomatic skill, and he uses all three in Amīr Ḥamza's service, sometimes to outwit his enemies, and sometimes to win them over. Khojī is not capable of such deeds, though his eagerness to serve his hero is no less than 'Amar's. But he sometimes attempts to use 'Amar's skills. Thus when Azād is being held captive by the princess of Poland, and Russian horsemen come to find him, Khojī assumes a wierd and wonderful disguise and goes among them in an attempt to discover exactly what their aims are.¹ 'Amar's contribution to his hero's success is very great, and he again and again saves the situation for Amīr Ḥamza's forces. Only once, in a quite untypical incident, does Sarshār show Khojī as a great warrior. In one engagement when the Turks are suddenly faced with a night attack he kills three Russian officers, saves the life of a Turkish champion, and when his horse is brought down, quickly recovers himself and wounds two more of

1. Vol.III, pp.856 ff.

the enemy.¹ But for the most part, where 'Amar excels, Khojī generally fails, and fails ridiculously; and here one sees the resemblance to Don Quixote. Don Quixote goes out on his conquests inspired by a self-induced love for his fantastically idealised Dulcinea. Khojī carries with him a mental picture of an almost wholly imaginary beauty Bī Shitāb Jān, though it is true that, unlike Don Quixote's Dulcinea, his love for her is not the driving force of his conduct. Don Quixote is the champion of ideas which, although he does not know it, have long been outmoded, and, stupefied by a life-long addiction to the fantastic tales of knight-errantry and fired with a desire to emulate the exploits of their heroes, he dreams the most fantastic dreams of what he will do. Khojī is similarly the champion of the outmoded, equally blind to the need for radical change, and equally prone to fantastic day-dreams, though where Don Quixote is inspired by visions before the event, Khojī's romancing takes place afterwards. In volume four, after his return to the service of the nawab in whose company we first met him, he tells the most fantastic tales of his and Azād's exploits, adding for good measure that the Nawāb's lost quail Safshikan had also been there and had distinguished itself by the most astounding feats on the battlefield.²

1. Vol.III, p.529.

2. cf. pp.446-59.

Khojī's ideas are, in the main, very much less lofty than Don Quixote's, and he lacks both Don Quixote's idealism and his culture. Don Quixote's identification with the society he sees himself as representing is entirely fanciful. The old order with which Khojī is identified is still in existence, though in a state of extreme decay, and Khojī's identification with it is real. But basically his values are those of the sponger and parasite, and in the main, he cleaves to the old order not because he is inspired by any lofty ideals associated with it but because he senses that it is much more difficult for parasites to live in the new one which is replacing it. Don Quixote is drugged by the opium of fantastic tales, and we are conscious of a pathetic nobility about him even as we laugh at the absurdities into which his fantasies lead him. Khojī is fuddled by real opium, and there is nothing ennobling about its effects. Don Quixote is possessed by an absurdly exaggerated idea of his own prowess, and so goes boldly into conflict with superior forces and takes a beating for which he always finds some satisfactory explanation. Khojī is equally ready to fight, though not always from such noble motives, and equally frequently takes a thrashing for which he too finds a reason which satisfies his vanity.

Khojī's readiness for a fight is described as follows:

سیاں خوچی میں ایک وصف یہ تھا کہ ہے
 سچے دیکھ کے لڑ پڑتے تھے۔
 چاہے اپنے سے دو گنا ہو چاہے ہو گنا
 یہ جھٹ ہی جائیں گے۔ غف کی طاقت
 ہے کہ جب آتا ہے کڑور پر۔ مگر سیاں
 خوچی کا غصہ بھی نرالا تھا۔ انکو جب
 آتا تو زور پر ہو انکو اٹھا کر کھینچ
 لیا اٹھا رہ لڑ سلیاں کھائیں۔ چاہے
 کچھ لڑ لعل ہائے۔ مگر یہ بر ترنا نہیں
 ہجھوڑ نے دوسرا وصف یہ تھا کہ پٹ
 پٹا کر جھاڑ پونچھ کر کھڑے ہوتے
 مگر امان لیا کہ ذرا انگ کریں۔ وہی تیرو
 وہی دم فہم۔

"It was one of Khojī's traits that without thinking what he was doing he would rush blindly into a fight. No matter if his opponents were two to one or four to one, he would be sure to grapple with them. Usually a man gets angry with someone weaker than himself, but our friend Khojī's anger was of quite a different kind. When he got angry it was with some giant who could pick him up and throw him with such force that he would turn over and over eighteen times before he stopped rolling. Yet even when all the stuffing had just been knocked out of him, he lost none of his bounce. This was his second trait. He would get up after a thrashing brushing the dust from his clothes without turning a hair and swaggering as proudly as before." 1

The same words fit Don Quixote's case equally well, but applied to him they would give no hint of the lofty motives which underlay his rashness.

After Don Quixote has been thrashed by the Yanguesan carriers he says

"I should not have drawn my sword against men who were not dubbed knights as I am. That is why I believe that the God of battles has permitted me to be so chastised." 1

In an almost exactly similar situation Khojī roars:

تسہم ابا جان کی جو کہیں چھرا پاس
 ہو گیا تو ان دونوں کی لاشیں پھرتی
 ہوتی وہ تو کہتے کہ خدا کو اچھا
 کہہ کر نا منظور تھا کہ میں اپنے زخم
 میں آپ آ رہا۔

"By my father, had I had my knife with me the corpses of both of them would have been thrashing about on the ground; but it pleased God to be merciful to them that he let my own force bring about my fall." 2

This is a slight variation on Khojī's usual cry of:

آگر قدر کی پاس ہوتی لاش پھرتی نظر آتی

"If I had had my sword, you would have seen his corpse thrashing in its death agonies."

1. Don Quixote, p.113.

2.

Where Don Quixote's explanation reflects the values of the knight-errant, Khojī's reflects only incorrigible vanity and self-deception.

In short, Khojī is indeed a kind of Don Quixote, but one of an altogether lower moral order, and operating on a lower moral plane. And in this respect he resembles Sancho Panza.

However he resembles Sancho in his admirable characteristics as well as in his weaknesses. One of Khojī's most engaging qualities is shown in the way he remains his unabashed self no matter what company he is in. Whether he is addressing a Nawab or the ordinary Lucknow man in the street, or a Turkish general or a Polish princess or an ordinary soldier, he is still the same Khojī who can talk the hind leg off a donkey and is never at a loss. Allied with this quality is his ability to see through the pretensions of others and to puncture their inflated ideas of themselves. Sarshār portrays some of these episodes at length and they are very amusing. Two of the best come in volume one. In one he makes fun of the hakīm who is treating Azād's illness, while in another he ridicules the language of a maulana whom the assembled company, including Azād, is listening to with the greatest of respect.¹

1. Vol.I, p.373ff., and p.540ff respectively.

His everyday shrewdness recalls Sancho's practical peasant wisdom, and if it sometimes shades off into timidity or unscrupulousness on the one side, it equally blends into nobler traits on the other. At its best it very effectively brings Azād down to earth. At one point in volume one they come to a railway station. They go on to the platform and Azād sees that there are well-kept plots in which flowers are growing. He at once launches into a panegyric of the British, couched in his most flowery language, contrasting their love of gardening and their interest in botany with the deplorable indifference of Indians towards such things. Khojī waits till he is finished and then remarks caustically:

آنکو کہا کہ کو تو ملتا ہے نہیں -
 آپ کو ٹھٹی اور باغ اور گل و
 پھل بیٹے بھرتے ہیں - ارے بھائی
 یہ سب بیفکر عوامی باتیں ہیں - جب
 روپیہ پاس ہوتا ہے تو اس وقت
 سب سوچتی ہے - یہاں تو
 شب ہو غنڈ خازیر بندم

چہ خورد ماہر اد فرزددم

والا لغندہ ہے -

"They [Indians] cannot get enough to eat, and here are you with your head full of fine bungalows and gardens and roses and night-ingales. Don't you see, my dear friend, that these things are for those who have no worries, while here [for us Indians] it is a case of:

'Even when I try to say my prayers at night I am wondering where I shall get food for my son in the morning.'" 1

In other instances his hard-headedness is tainted with less admirable things. In volume one after Azād has accepted Husn Arā's condition and promised to go and fight the Russians, Khojī becomes very apprehensive for his safety and suggests that Azād should let him impress upon her the terrible dangers that he will be facing, so that she will withdraw her demand.² In volume three,³ where Azād is in difficulties with the Princess of Poland who is holding him captive because he will not agree to marry her, Khojī tells him that he is a fool to be so obstinate. He points out that unless he can escape from the Princess of Poland, there is no question of his fulfilling his pledge to Husn Arā, and since the only way to escape is to promise to do what she wants, this is the obvious course to take. Azād should marry the Princess, and moreover get all the enjoyment out of her that he can. Before they are out of their difficulties however, Maida and Clarissa arrive disguised as men, and the

1. Vol.I, p.484.
 2. Vol.I, pp.355-6.
 3. Vol.III, pp.621-2.

Princess falls in love with them. Here again it is Khojī who is quick to sense the opportunities which this development offers them, and while Azād's wounded vanity now makes him determined to stay, Khojī urges him to take advantage of the Princess's loss of interest in him in order to make his escape.¹ Sometimes his practical sense merges with qualities of greater worth. In volume one, where Azād is lingering aimlessly in Bombay, Khojī not only brings him down to earth but reminds him bluntly of what his sense of honour should demand of him.

ارے یارو کیا اندھیر ہے - تم روم
 چلتے چلتے کہاں سے سے پھرتے ہو -
 تم کو اپنا بات کا ذرا
 پاس نہیں کسی سے وعدہ کیا ہے
 پھر یہ راکرنا چاہئے یا نہیں؟ اب
 آخر روم تک جاؤ گے؟ عاقبت کیا؟ با
 شتر کے دن؟ اچی بس۔۔۔ اب اپنی سمجھاؤ اور
 چلو سیدھے۔۔۔

"You're too bad my friend. You set out for Turkey, and now what are you doing wandering about? ... You think nothing of your own promise. When you've pledged your word to someone, should you keep it or shouldn't you? When do you aim to get to Turkey? On the Last Day? On Judgement Day? Come on now; pack your baggage and let's be off... 2

1. Vol.III, p.667.

2. Vol.I, p.555.

In volume two Āzād and Khojī are discussing the possibility that Āzād may be killed in battle. Āzād says that Khojī would have to break the news to Husn Arā, but Khojī replies:

اگر ہم ڈوبتے تھے تو لڑتے پڑھتے پڑھتے
 وہاں تک پہنچے تو جا کے ہمیں بتائے کہ
 ایک عورت کو میاں آزاد عقد لگائے
 میں لائے اب نرسے سے روم میں
 دندناتے ہیں ہم یہ نہ کہیں گے کہ آزاد
 ہاں بحق تسلیم ہو گئے۔۔۔۔۔ اور لکھ
 بھینچیں کہ میاں آزاد لڑے۔۔۔۔۔ تو
 حسن آلی ہاں پر بن آئے یا نہیں۔۔۔
 ہو یہ سننے کہ آزاد میں تو رہیں جا گئے
 مگر عاشق ساد تو نہ محفے ہوئے اور
 بد معاشر لگے۔۔۔۔۔ تو۔۔۔
 مختار کے نام سے نفرت ہو جائے
 اور رنج تو قریب پھیلنے نہ پائے۔

"If I somehow manage to stagger back home, I shall go and tell Husn Arā, 'Azād has married a woman there; he's having a high old time in Turkey.' I shan't tell her that you're dead....

If I send her word that you're dead, it'll put her own life in danger, won't it? But if she hears that you are alive and well but have been untrue to your love, and turned out

to be a liar and a scoundrel ... she will hate the very sound of your name and her hatred will drive out sorrow." 1

There is more than mere commonsense in a man who is capable of thinking in this way. Just as in Don Quixote Sancho's love for and devotion to his master grows stronger as time passes, so does Khojī's devotion to Azād. Already in volume one when Azād falls ill we see the completely unselfish way in which Khojī nurses him back to health, running innumerable errands for him and putting up uncomplainingly with his peevishness.² His buffoonery is often inspired by the same spirit. For example, on their way to Bombay Azād meets two girls with whom he was friends when they were children. Khojī and Azād stay with them for some time, and when the time comes to say goodbye they start to cry. Azād too is in tears. At this point Khojī goes to mount his pony, but as he puts his foot in the stirrup the girths shift and the saddle-cloth, saddle and all the other paraphernalia come crashing to the ground with Khojī underneath. At this all of them burst out laughing. Khojī lies absolutely motionless where he has fallen. Azād calls out to him to get up, but Khojī just lies there staring at the sky until the girls' old grandfather helps him up, brushes him down, tightens the saddle-girths and sets him

1. Vol.II, p.80.

2. Vol.I, the long passage beginning on page 362.

on the pony's back. All of a sudden Khojī shouts, "If I'd had my sword by me I'd have struck the pony's head from its body." Later on, after their departure Azād grumbles at Khojī for making such a fool of himself. Khojī thereupon explains that he had done it all on purpose, leaving the saddle loose so that it would fall the moment he put his foot in the stirrup.

میں نے دیکھا کہ جو ہے سوٹے سوٹے
 آنسو بہا ہے رو رہا ہے پلہ رہا ہے
 سو جا کہ اتلو نہ ہنسا یا تو ہو جی
 نام نہیں

"I saw the great tears rolling down your faces as you wept and howled... I thought to myself, 'I'll make them laugh, or my name's not Khojī!'" 1

There are other occasions too where he uses his knack of making people laugh as a means of relieving their anxiety. When on their way to Turkey their ship runs into a storm and everyone is full of apprehension Khojī says:

سمیٹے ہو ٹرکی وری جانے کا قصد نہ کرو
 نہ مانا لو اب کہلتو۔ خبر خدا کرے
 جہاز تباہ ہو تو چین میں پہنچے
 کہ اغم تو بیدے۔

"I kept telling you not to set out for Turkey, but you wouldn't listen and now you've got to pay the price! O well, God grant that if the ship is wrecked we somehow get to China. At any rate we'll get opium there." 1

When the ship is sinking and Azād shouts to him to jump into the life-boat, he shouts back, "Will one of you run and fetch my opium box?" 2

From incidents like these one sees that he is a man who possesses real courage and genuine devotion to his friends, and that his humour on such occasions is the way in which these qualities find expression. In fact his humour is an armour with which he protects both his friends and himself from becoming a prey to despondency or alarm, and with which he disguises the deeper feelings which in normal circumstances it would embarrass him to express directly. We can see this from the rare instances where he has not the heart to speak other than seriously. At one point he is greatly worried by Azād's prolonged depression. He says:

یا تو اور رہ جو انگریزی کی کہ ذرا سے
اشارہ کی دیر تھی دن سے جہاز پر
سوار ہو گئے - وطن مانوف کو فیرباد
کہہ کر دم چلے اور یا اب الفدر
پریشانی اور فیربانی اور گدائی ہے کہ
بات کرنا تک دو معر ہے یہ کیا بات ہے

1. Vol.II, p.46.
2. Vol.II, p.76.

دل کو خوب مہبوط رکھو کوئی کتاب پڑھو
 تم اپنے لائق فائق آدمی ہو مجھے دس
 بارہ دن سے کلمو پڑھتے نہیں دیکھا
 ان دنوں رات سٹالی کتب کرتے
 تھے دل بہلتا تھا اب آج کل بے تکلم پڑھنا
 لفظ کر دیا وخت نے آن دیو جا
 عشق نے ٹپٹوایا

"Once you were in such high spirits that on a mere hint you boarded the ship, bade farewell to your beloved country and set off for Turkey. And now you are as dejected and depressed and worried that even to talk seems a burden to you. What has become of you? Keep a stout heart! Take up a book. You are so talented a man, and yet for the last ten to twelve days I have never seen you reading. In those days you were busy day and night with your studies, and your mind was at ease. And now you've stopped reading altogether. Love Desperation has you in its grip, and now is strangling you." 1

But it usually takes the most desperate situations to make him serious; and when these arise it is his devotion to Azād or grief at his own inability to help him that finds expression. At one point during the voyage when it looks as though their boat is sinking, he cries out:

ارے آزاد ہائے تیری جوانی نشتی

"Alas, Azād that you should die so young!" 2

1. Vol. II, p. 82.
 2. Vol. II, p. 57.

When they are in Malta he falls so seriously ill that he thinks he is going to die. He is oppressed by the thought that Azād must now manage without him. Azād tries to cheer him up, but he replies:

اے وہ میں سروں باہنم میں جاؤں
 گھر مہجائی واہیلے خدا کے جہان کا
 خیال رکھنا ایسا نہ ہو کہ کوئی آگ
 میں جلتا ہو اور تم جھانڈو۔ خدا تمہارا
 حافظ و ناصر ہے ہم تو اب جلتے ہیں خطا
 معاف۔ آگ بسنی خوشی تمہارا ساتھ
 دیا۔ اب کیجوری ہے۔

"No, my friend. Anyway if I die and go to hell don't you worry. But in God's name I implore you to take care for your own safety, and see that you don't jump into the fire in which you see others burning. Now God is your help and your protection, for I am dying. Forgive me my shortcomings. So far I have stood by you gladly, but now there is nothing I can do." 1

When we look back over volume two we feel that it is at this point that Sarshār decides to give fuller rein to his own sympathies for Khojī and to show him henceforth in a generally favourable light, although his role of buffoon, constantly exposed to Sarshār's heavy-handed humour, continues throughout the book. But if Sarshār's own attitude to Khojī

1. Vol.II, p.154.

changes from this point, that of his hero Azād shows hardly any change at all. In fact situations are portrayed in which Azād's treatment of Khojī is shabby in the extreme; but this only makes more striking Khojī's unwavering devotion to him. In the instance already quoted¹ when Azād is preparing to make his escape with Maida and Clarissa leaving Khojī behind, Khojī's response to his callousness is to say:

خوجی - فی امان اللہ - خدا تم کو صدوسی
سال کی عمر عطا کرے آمین -

"God be your protection. And may he grant that you live to be a hundred and thirty. Amen!"²

It is Maida who tries to soften the effect of Azād's callousness by explaining the difficulties of the situation. Khojī quite cheerfully cuts her short:

ابھی جناب آج آٹھویں دن
بندہ و طغنیہ میں بیوتا

"My dear lady, within a week your humble servant will be in Constantinople."³

If it is true that these admirable traits in Khojī derive partly from the model of Sancho Panza, it is no less true that they are directly linked with the best of the

1. p. above.

2. Vol.III, p.773.

3. Vol.III, p.773.

traditional values of the old Lucknow society which Khojī was created to represent. We have seen that Sarshār introduced him in the first place as a figure in whom he could ridicule the old order, but the more Khojī comes to life in Sarshār's hands, the more complex a figure does he become, and the character which started as the embodiment of only the undesirable features of the old society comes more and more to embody also that society's good features. Because Khojī is a living character, and because Sarshār is a realist writer as well as a reformer, his creation develops independently of its creator's wishes and intentions and like all real characters, displays good features as well as bad. Among the hallmarks of the Lakhnāvī are a zest for life, an uninhibited delight in all life's pleasures, an enthusiasm for literature and for colourful and expressive language, a quickness of wit both in speech and in conduct, a strong sense of humour, an equally strong sense of pride in the historic traditions of his city, and a sense of personal honour expressed in strict adherence to modes of behaviour laid down by his forefathers. All these qualities Khojī has. Clearly some of them do not have any decisive bearing on standards of conduct, while others can be employed either for good ends or for bad; and because Khojī becomes a fully-integrated character, good and bad qualities, and good and bad uses made of qualities which are in themselves neutral,

are inextricably woven together in his actions. We admire his zest for life. We admire or condemn his zest for pleasure depending upon the nature of his pleasure. One of his uninhibited pleasures is opium, and though his craving more often than not in the subject of humorous treatment of a rather broad, ^{farical} ~~forced~~ kind, Sarshār leaves us in no doubt of his contempt for the opium addict, viewing him as a common figure in the old society who has no place in the new; and he carries us with him in this attitude. His delight in literature is partly admirable, partly ridiculous. He is forever interrupting himself to quote Urdu and Persian verses, and while some are indeed apt, others are ludicrously inappropriate to the occasion. So also with his language; he is at his best in his use of vivid colloquial of everyday Lucknow speech, and at his worst when he attempts the high-flown. (The same thing, incidentally, is true of Sarshār himself; but in depicting Khojī he deliberately parodies the high-flown style of speech.) The other qualities of the Lakhnavi weigh more heavily in the scale, whether for good or bad. The habit of treating everything humorously often means on the one hand, a refusal to face problems which demand a serious approach. "Life is too short to worry" is the attitude, - or, as Khojī once puts it:

میاں دو دن کی زندگی پیلے کون عمر کرے سوائے
عمر حسین کے کوئی اور عمر کیا ہی نہیں

"My friend, who can be bothered when life is so short? I've never grieved over anything - except the martyrdom of Husain." 1

But on the other hand, as in the examples quoted above, it helps Khojī and his companions to face the most extreme dangers courageously and without any panic. Quickness of wit plays a similar role, on the one hand justifying the mode of life of the parasitical courtier which a man of modern values would find quite inconsistent with his self-respect, and on the developing of the resourcefulness which is needed to meet the varied situations of a more useful life. The most typically Lakhnavi quality of all is perhaps that which is called ^{by} the untranslatable name of وفا (Vaḷ'adārī) - a quality in which trueness to tradition and trueness to one's sense of honour are blended into a single whole. The vaḷ'adār man is he for whom it is simply not possible to do what is 'not done', whether in trivial matters or in matters of the most serious import. Vaḷ'adārī is the supreme value of the upholders of the old light, and it ensures indiscriminately the preservation of everything bad and everything good in the old society; for in the eyes of the vaḷ'adār man to re-examine traditional modes of conduct in the light of reason is not merely unnecessary but unseemly. The sense of indiscriminate pride in all the traditions of old Lucknow is,

1. Vol.II, p.79.

in a sense, simply one aspect of vaz'adārī. That there were amongst these traditions some which gave every ground for pride has already been shown. But Khojī feels the same intense pride in others of which a more rational man would feel ashamed. This pride appears at its most ridiculous in the incident referred to above, where Khojī displays great prowess on the battlefield. When the Turkish officers heap praises on him he responds:

ہم شاہی کا زمانہ دیکھ ہوئے ہیں

"I have lived in the time of the [Avadh] kings".

- as though to say that one who had lived in those times would be equal to any occasion. Fantasy could not contrast more glaringly with fact, for, as we have seen in chapter two, the period of the Avadh kings was a period of political, military, administrative, social and economic impotence.

But if it is Khojī's vaz'adārī which makes him staunchly champion the old light rejecting automatically and indignantly every criticism of it, it is this same vaz'adārī which prescribes his conduct when, having once undertaken to be Azād's companion, he is ready to stand by him in every difficulty, with a staunchness such as Sarshār never succeeds in convincing us that Azād himself possesses. The climax in this respect is reached when Khojī is captured by the Russians, imprisoned and ill-treated in an attempt to

get him to reveal Azād's whereabouts, but refuses to answer their questions even under the threat of death.¹ It is disappointing that after raising him to these heights Sarshār seems as though he does not know what to do with him in the last volume, when Khojī and his hero are both back in India. We feel that his experiences should have made it impossible for him simply to revert once more to the kind of life he was leading when we first met him in volume one. But this is just what he does. After his stupidity has landed him in all sorts of ridiculous difficulties, he returns at last to the service of the Nawab, and though we meet him again on several occasions in Azād's company, he virtually fades out of the story towards the end, and we are not told what has happened to him.

All the same, in the creation of Khojī we see Sarshār's talent at the height of its power. Khojī becomes so real that Sarshār himself is carried away by him, beginning to express through him his own love for Lucknow, which is no less deeply-rooted in him than his enthusiasm for the new ideas. And the result is that, as we shall see in the next section, he speaks with two voices, and the impact of his preaching is diminished accordingly. But this close bond of sympathy between Khojī and his creator combines with Sarshār's realistic talent to make Khojī not only the most

1. Vol.III, p.1015.

living character in Fasāna i Azād but one of the most sympathetic characters in the whole of Urdu prose narrative literature. We can see from the columns of Avadh Akhbār how warmly Sarshār's readers responded to Khojī. A correspondent whose letter was published on 28th November 1879 writes that Khojī has become so real to him that he expects to run into him any day, and this is not untypical of the response he evoked. He has continued to win this sort of response up to the present day, and sketches in which Khojī is shown in ever more varied situations continue to be published. If Sarshār had never produced another character, Khojī alone would have been enough to ensure his fame.

(iii) Fasāna i Āzād as a Propagandist Tale.

We have seen that Sarshār repeatedly claims that in Fasāna i Āzād he is writing a modern realistic novel on European lines. But it is clear that didactic purpose of this "novel" was always well to the fore. His statement that the "plot" of the novel is to depict its hero's criticism of evil customs as he goes from city to city and country to country has already been quoted. This in itself reveals Sarshār's real object, and when it comes to the point he is himself obliged to admit (where he defends his portrayal of Husn Arā) that his didactic purpose in the last resort takes precedence over realism. This is the nearest he comes to admitting that the two are not fully compatible, but we his readers see the clash between them again and again throughout the story. But this is not the only contradiction in Fasāna i Āzād. Besides the conflict between realism and propaganda there are also conflicts between different ideals which at various stages Sarshār sets before his readers.

We have seen in an earlier chapter what were the modern ideas that Sarshār was concerned to propagate and it is appropriate to examine first the extent to which he succeeds. He realises first that if he is to gain a hearing for the new ideas he must first shake his readers' addiction to the old, and in the early part of the work ridicule of and contempt for the old society is very

prominent. In the short-lived character of Chammī Jān he makes his first target the effeminacy and lack of vigour of the old culture. Chammī Jān is introduced in the following passage:

خود کے بزرگوں اور زریبا اندام نازک فرام
 کٹنگھام لہو لپٹ کتا دھانی رنگا ہوا کرتا الہیہ
 روپیہ کنزوالی مہین شربتی کما تین کمر لٹوئی کا
 پست آنڈر کھا گلہن کا چوڑا ریدار ٹھٹنا ہینے
 بیسواہیں کی طرح بٹیاں ہائے عطر عروس لٹھائے
 ننگے دار ماتہ بھرتی ننھی لٹوئی آہین سے
 اٹھائے۔ ہاتھوں میں مہندی پور پور ہجھلے آنٹھوں
 میں لہرے کی تکریر جھپٹے ہینے کتا زرد ننھی چلے عواں
 ہوتہ زریب پاکٹے ہوتے آہ عجب لوج
 سے کمر لہی کھاتے بھونٹ بھونٹ کتر قدم
 در صہرے چلے آتے حقو -

The abundance of technical terms in this passage makes translation almost impossible and only the gist can be given here. Chammī Jān is described as a young man of effeminate build who walks with a swaying gait, placing each foot delicately as he treads. He is dressed in all his finery - a bright green kurta, a close-fitting, long-skirted coat, and a pāijāma cut to the line of his calves and made of material into which flower patterns are woven. He wears his hair in curls "like a prostitute" and uses perfume. His hat

is set at a rakish angle. The palms of his hands are dyed with henna and he has rings on every finger. His eyes are tinted with collyrium, and his feet adorned with slippers of yellow velvet.

The description makes it clear that Sarshār's aim is to inspire disgust rather than mirth, and it is into the mouth of this character that he puts those sentiments of complacent superiority which more than anything else prevent his fellow Lakhnavis from paying any serious attention to new ideas. Chammī Jān expresses himself in true Lakhnavī style:

اور میاں جو سلف اپنے دیکھے ہیں ہفت اعلیٰ سے
 بادشاہ کسی فاتحانہ جملہ فرورستی بناؤ لو خواب
 میں بھی نصیب نہ ہوئے ہونڈے۔ یہ ہے اب یہاں
 رہ گیا گیا ہے۔ طلی کو جوں میں لٹے لوٹتے ہیں
 سو جب سے دولت کے لئے تاملنے لگا اب وہ بھی
 نظر نہیں آتے۔۔۔۔۔ نئی سڑک کی طرف
 ہو نکلا تو نظر پیر ایک پانچویں بندھا دیکھا سوٹ
 سے کھاس آجھال رہا تھا۔ پوچھا کیوں میاں
 یہ کسا پانچویں ہے۔ ایک فوش تضح فوش وضح
 جوان بول اٹھے۔ ہفرت یہ بی صید رہاں کا پانچویں
 ہے۔ قسم خدا کی جھوٹ بولنا اور سورا کھانا برابر
 ہے والہم ایسا سرور ہوا آنکھیں پر خم ہوئیں سر
 تھک گیا۔ دل بھر آیا اللہ رے عروج خدا ہوئے
 لکھنؤ کو پھر غنیمت ہے۔ نظر کوئی نہ کوئی اچھی عسوات
 آہی جاتی ہے۔ شکر ہے خداوند کہ لکھنؤ میں اب بھی
 ارباب ہم موجود ہیں۔ اور میں نہیں تو دنیا کیونکر قائم ہو

"My friend, the splendours which we have seen are beyond the dreams of the proudest kings and the ancient emperors who held the world in their power... Alas, nothing is left to us now. The dogs roam in the deserted lanes - in fact we don't even see the dogs any more now that you get two annas a dog. (1) Walking towards the new road the other day I saw an elephant tethered at the street corner, playfully tossing grass into the air with his trunk. I enquired whose it was, and a well-dressed young gentleman replied, 'Sir, it is Bī Haidar Jān's elephant. I swear by God, I would no more tell a lie than I would eat pork. By God, I felt such joy that my eyes moistened. My heart was too full for words. What splendour! God prosper Lucknow! Even now it is a wonderful city where fair faces may be seen. Thanks be to God that Lucknow still holds men of spirit. For if it did not on what would the world's foundations rest?" (2)

This is a scathingly sarcastic picture. Lucknow is not what it was in the good old days, but, thank God, it is still great, and because it is great all's well with the world. And the supreme token of this greatness is that its wealthy men still know how to appreciate a courtesan's beauty, and to show their appreciation to such effect that she can keep a fine elephant as the symbol of her exalted status.

Finally he shows through Chammī Jān the evils of an outlook in which sheer lethargy maintains the established ways even in face of a growing awareness of the need for

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1. This presumably means that the authorities were trying to keep down the number of stray dogs by paying two annas for every one caught and handed over to them to be destroyed.
 2. Vol.I,p.4.

change. He makes him say:

سچ تو یہ کہ عمر بھر اس نایح و رناب ہی کے پھندے
 میں جھینے رہو۔ یاد الہی بالائے طاق تحصیل
 علم جھینر پر تہذیب کی دم میں خدا کا عین
 شد کے بن بٹھے لیکن اب تو آئیدہ از
 کد گزشتہ کہ تیب نیزہ تیب دست
 کا نقشہ ہے۔ آپ جو اس بھروسہ
 رہیں کہ ہمیں تہذیب سکھائیں تو فیر
 صلاح ہے۔ اس میں لوڑھے طوطے بھی
 قرآن پڑھا کرتے ہیں

"The truth is that we've spent our whole lives in the toils of frivolous pleasures. We don't worry about our duties to God. We don't care about the pursuits of learning or the improvements of our ways. We're all in a fair way to becoming rakes and profligates. But now it's a case of 'The water has risen above our heads; what matter whether it is by a hand's breadth or by the length of a lance?' And you think you can civilise us! A fine project! Can you teach an old parrot to recite the Qurān?" 1

Having thus set the scene in the first few pages, he goes on to develop the story along the lines of a 'plot', inserting in the loose framework of his hero's travels ridicule and criticism of the old way of life. Characteristically, old-style educational methods receive a great deal of hostile attention. He is equally forthright in his

condemnation of Hindu Pāthshālas and Muslim Maktabs, though his own education and cultural background gave him a more intimate knowledge of the latter and as a natural result they come in for more detailed criticism. In volume one Āzād is depicted as visiting a number of schools and commenting scathingly on all their defects. The school buildings are dilapidated, the maulvis who allegedly teach the children are poor ignorant, underpaid, prejudiced, corrupt and tyrannical, bullying the children into learning by heart books in languages (Arabic and Persian) they do not understand (and which all too often their teachers too do not understand fully) on themes quite unsuited to children's taste and experience, and in surroundings in which no regard whatever is paid to the elementary demands of health and hygiene. In one amusing episode one such maulvi is depicted as accepting Āzād's challenge to a public examination of his general knowledge and of his fitness to teach. He is of course exposed before his audience as a complete fool.¹ To make sure that the lessons of all this are clearly learnt, Sarshār makes Āzād draw up a fourteen-point list of rules to be observed in children's education. Some of the more important are as follows:

1. Children should not be kept in school all day from morning till evening. School hours should be from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

1. Vol.I, p.66.

2. Pupils should be grouped in classes of not more than twelve.
3. Literature and languages should not be the only subjects taught. Mathematics and history should also be taught.
4. The children should not be made to repeat their lesson in chorus, all at the same time.
5. More attention should be paid to correcting the pupils' speech.
6. Pupils should be given a grounding in Urdu before starting to learn Persian.¹

Other social evils also come in for extensive criticism which is sometimes expressed directly and sometimes through the portrayal of incidents which are often brought in solely for the purpose of providing an unmistakable moral. The evils of intoxication (whether by wine, opium, or hemp), ignorant superstitions, the unhealthiness of Indian modes of life, the senseless extravagance of old marriage customs, child marriage, marriages of old men to young girls,² the ban upon the re-marriage of widows, the absurdity of the pretensions of the old aristocracy with its foolish pride in lineage and ancestry, the self-deception of the old intelligentsia with its claims to have developed human

1. Vol.I, p.61.

2. It seems that the figures of Allah Rakhi and her aged husband were first introduced with the idea of providing the basis for a moral tale on this theme.

knowledge to a point beyond which no further progress is possible - these and many other things are attacked and subjected to ridicule.

As against these old, bad ideas Sarshār advances the new values which he has championed and for a large part of the book these are preached in the same direct way as the old values are attacked. As we would expect, the two causes most dear to his heart - modern education and women's emancipation - both loom large, though they are not both handled in the same way. The vital importance of education is, in general, stressed quite directly. As we have seen, Sarshār lays down detailed prescriptions for the education of children, but education up to and including university level is also dealt with, particularly in volume four. This is not all. Azād, Humāyūn Far and other positive characters are shown as enthusiasts for public lectures addressed to adult audiences on such subjects as the harmful effect of superstition, the blessings of science and so on. From his enthusiasm for modern education, enthusiasm for the British naturally follows, for, like so many of his contemporaries, he is greatly impressed by what he knows of British ways of life, and sees the British as the exponents of everything which he wants to see Indians adopt. He therefore frequently sings the praises of British ways with great zest, and, it must be said

with a degree of naivete which greatly weakens the impact of his propaganda. His knowledge is based mainly upon what he had seen and heard of them in India and what he had^s read of them in books. He admired the most obviously striking things about them, like their power and efficiency, their superior physique, their concern for health and hygiene and for the upbringing and schooling of their children, which was organised on principles which accorded much better with common-sense than did the traditional Indian systems. There is no sign that he thought deeply about the factors which made the British what they were, but he vaguely connected them with their sense of the importance of scientific advance and of the need for a man to improve himself and his position and not to content himself with being simply what his fathers had been. The naivete of his view of the British emerges in an unintentionally amusing passage in volume one, where Azād undertakes to convince a sceptical companion of the superiority of English ways of life.¹

"Next day as soon as it is light they set off together, and walk until they have left the city proper behind them and reached the cantonment. There they see from the road a fine bungalow standing in well-kept grounds, and inside it, an English gentleman and his wife taking their breakfast. Sarshār's description is interesting. The English gentleman is barely mentioned, but the lady is accorded the

1. Mr. R. Russell has discussed this passage at length in his unpublished paper on Urdu prose narrative, and I quote the relevant extract here.

full dāstān treatment, rhyming prose and all. "There in a fine room was a Sahib seated on a chair, and near him an idol [the standard metaphor for a beautiful woman] with a face like a houri of Paradise - her body as delicate, and her cheeks as red, as a rose - gracing a more delicate chair. Her face was radiant, her black dress was of costly silk, and her perfume so fragrant that gusts of it were wafted to the road outside and permeated all one's senses. Both were conversing sweetly together and making short work of some mutton chops. Azād's friend was lost in admiration and delight."

In other words, the sight of a nondescript Englishman and a highly perfumed Englishwoman eating mutton chops for breakfast is enough to prove the superiority of the English way of life!"

Sarshār thought of the British as the bearers of modern education and science to India, and general support for British rule was for him a natural consequence of his attitude towards them.

His advocacy of women's emancipation is not conducted in the same direct way, for reasons which will be discussed below.

It is important to note that if his attitude towards the British way of life is one of almost entirely uncritical admiration, and his support for British rule enthusiastic, there are British policies and administrative methods of which he has criticisms to express. He writes quite forthrightly against features of British administration which seem to him to be bad, and devotes even more space to ridiculing those amongst his fellow-countrymen who blindly

imitate everything British just because it is British. Thus he criticises the content of education in the new universities because of its inadequate attention to the sciences, though even more than the educational system he criticises its Indian products. Even in volume one¹ he attacks these Indians for their almost universal desire to go into government service rather than devote their talents to the improvement of Indian agriculture, commerce and industry. It is noteworthy that his hero Azād is shown after his triumphant return to India as devoting most of his energies to giving practical effect to his ideas on education, commerce and industry. The closing chapter of the whole work gives so clear a picture of what Sarshār wanted Indians to learn from the British example that it is worth summarising here at some length. Sarshār says that for three years Azād devoted all his efforts to the advancement of his country. He re-established the Department of Education on new lines; he changed the books prescribed for the courses; and on his proposal radical changes were made in the university system. His articles in Urdu and English began to appear in various newspapers, and he sent a number of excellent articles to publications in England. He journeyed to Europe, spent six months in Paris and a year in England, and visited a number of other places in Europe. On his return to India he devoted

1. pp.38-9.

much effort to the establishment of cotton- and paper-mills. He wrote for reputable Indian newspapers proving that India would never be able to compare with the civilized countries of Europe in wealth, culture or prosperity until such time as machine industry was more fully developed. These articles produced such an effect that a great impetus was given to the development of Indian industry, and Indians of noble family, rulers of the princely states and high government officials took out shares in these enterprises. Despite initial difficulties Azād's determination brought such prosperity to these industries that all his critics were confounded and new mills and factories began to spring up everywhere, providing employment for thousands of labourers and educated men and producing cheap cloth for the market. Azād then toured all the famous cities of India, giving lectures and establishing associations for the advancement of the country. He then turned his attention to public health. His eloquence got the vaccination bill passed. Well-run municipal authorities were set up in every city. The chemists' shops were re-organised and stocked with trustworthy medicines. When his twin sons reached the age of fourteen he sent them to England to complete their education and both of them greatly distinguished themselves there. In this way he closes the book by proving his oft-repeated claim that Indians are in no way inferior to the British, and given the same opportunities, they could reach the same standards of achievement.

The features of British rule in India in which Sarshār found most to criticise were those which had to do with the organisation of the police and the administration of justice, and it is significant that he himself had practical experience of employment in the courts which enabled him to see these things at close quarters. His attitude to the police is very unfavourable throughout. They are shown as stupid, lazy, inefficient, dishonest, corrupt and brutal, and no good qualities are shown which might in some measure compensate for these faults. The system of justice is shown as something so far removed from Indian traditions as to be incomprehensible to the people whom it was intended to serve, and this had produced a class of vakīls who took advantage of this fact to feather their own nests by every unscrupulous means.

British officials in India are criticised for their lack of competence in Urdu, for this inevitably means that they cannot fully understand issues that come before them for decision and so obviously cannot take the proper measures in relation to them. In one episode which illustrates this point a British official is shown as appointing an Indian to a clerical post because he was the only one among the applicants whose name he could pronounce.

With these attitudes it is not difficult to understand why Sarshār ridiculed blind and ignorant imitation of the

British. One whole episode in volume three is devoted to this theme. A semi-educated Indian thākūr is depicted who is so proud of his supposedly English ways that he will not even associate with other Indians who do not share his views; but his ignorance makes him a prey of unscrupulous people who exploit it, and he ends up by losing everything he has and earning the contempt of all who know him. This is the most sustained treatment of the theme, but Sarshār's disapproval of Indians who ape British ways is repeatedly made clear throughout the book.

If Sarshār had written his whole book in this way, interspersing direct preaching with moral tales clothed in a thin narrative disguise, Fasāna i Azād would not have been the work of literature that it is. Sarshār's recipe for a "fine plot" does not in fact produce a novel or indeed any kind of modern narrative worthy of the name. He himself seems to have realised this, for before he is half-way through the first volume he has begun to give more prominence to the narrative element and to sustained pieces of realistic writing from which the reader is to a large extent left to draw his own conclusions rather than having Sarshār's conclusions pushed down his throat. The book ceases to be a series of lectures and satirical sketches, and becomes a work of literature. It is true that Sarshār continues to address

his readers direct from time to time throughout the book and to introduce subsidiary stories in which the didactic aim is all too obvious, but these elements are no longer so predominant as they were in the early part of volume one. There is no doubt that Sarshār not only wrote better, but also served his own propagandist purpose better by this more complex and refined method. The reader's interest is held by the portrayal of characters whom he recognises as essentially real and by the changing situations of a narrative which unfolds according to its own logic. Thus the portrayal in volume one of the simple-minded Nawab and his courtiers, with all its wealth of circumstantial detail, leads the reader to the conviction of the rottenness of this kind of society far more surely than any amount of direct preaching would have done. Or the brilliant scene in which the young courtesan is shown lording it over the nawāb and his court,¹ drives home a lesson far more effectively than a lecture on the subject could do. The dropping of Chammī Jān and his replacement by Khojī represents an advance of the same kind. It is not that Chammī Jān, despite all the exaggeration with which he is pictured, seems an entirely unreal character; but he is a character in which only negative features are shown, and these too are so pronounced that the reader cannot

1. Vol.I, p.425. This episode is more fully discussed in the next section.

feel that minimum of identification with him which is needed if the illusion of reality is to be sustained. Khojī on the other hand, quickly becomes a fully-rounded character, and for that very reason wherever his actions represent whatever is ridiculous or outworn in the old society we more readily recognise that this is so, and draw the conclusions which Sarshār wishes us to draw.

To this extent Sarshār, by allowing freer rein to his narrative and realistic talent strengthens rather than weakens the propagandist impact of his work. And yet a point comes where the same talent runs counter to his didactic aim. This process can be most clearly traced in the development of Khojī's character. Sarshār's original scheme was to present two complementary pictures, one of the rottenness of the old values, and one of the excellence of the new. But the more fully and convincingly Khojī is portrayed, the more Sarshār is led, perhaps even without knowing it, into a portrayal not only of the defects of the old order but of its virtues too. This was illustrated clearly enough when Khojī's character was discussed in the previous section, and need not be elaborated here. We need only to add that this development though evidently unprovided for in Sarshār's original scheme does not yet negate his original purpose, for the defects of the old society do not cease to be defects because that society is seen to have possessed virtues as well. But Khojī

leads Sarshār into deeper waters than this, gradually arousing in him all the deep sense of attachment for and pride in old Lucknow which he really felt and making it impossible for him to attack it with the ruthlessness he had originally intended. As with almost all Lakhnavis (with the outstanding exception of Ruswā) his love for Lucknow tended to be largely indiscriminate, expressing itself in a sense of pride not only in those traditions which warranted such a feeling but also in those which Sarshār's more conscious judgement would have rejected.

It inevitably follows that to some extent he finds himself expressing, or at any rate implying praise, where consistency demanded that he should have expressed censure; and to this extent he negates his own aims.

When we turn to Sarshār's application of this same indirect method to the treatment of the new light - the method of allowing the conclusions to emerge naturally from a realistic narrative - we find him once again drawn into a similar situation, although in this case by a somewhat different logic. The problems which faced him here are seen at their most acute in the portrayal of Ḥusn Arā. Sarshār starts his task with a very great disadvantage. He feels compelled to refrain from presenting his ideals of women's emancipation directly; but this is not because of any realisation of the

greater efficiency of indirect means, but by the fear that if he were to do so he would be offering his readers medicine too strong for them to swallow. It is striking that he only once, and then somewhat briefly, attacks purdah quite forthrightly. This is at the point in the story where Āzād and Khojī reach Bombay and see that there are numbers of women there who do not observe purdah. Khojī is scandalised, but Āzād replies:

پردہ ڈھکے کے کا نام ہے۔۔۔
 ارے نادان برفح سے ہیں
 یا کبازی آتی ہے کہیں چادر
 حیا سکھاتی ہے

"This purdah is a hoax... You stupid fellow, do you think a burga guarantees chastity or that the veil teaches modesty?" 1

And he goes on to say that when he comes back from Turkey he intends to settle with Husn Arā in Bombay so that they may live together in this atmosphere of freedom.

But in general he does not feel that he can be so outspoken. He proceeds instead by creating a heroine to embody his ideas. The difficulties into which this leads him have already been discussed at some length. The inherent logic may be summed up as follows. Husn Arā is to embody Sarshār's advanced ideas; but these ideals are not acceptable;

1. Vol.I, p.511.

therefore the pill must be sweetened by adding to her the qualities of the dāstān heroine; but the prototype of the dāstān heroine (albeit discreetly unacknowledged) is the Lucknow courtesan, and while one may close one's eyes to this in the world of fantasy to which the dāstān belongs, one becomes uncomfortably aware of it in a work which, as its author is always telling us, is "true to nature", especially when Sarshār's natural realism leads him, all unconsciously perhaps, to draw his emancipated woman from the model of the courtesan, the only real-life emancipated woman that he knew; therefore the pill needs further sweetening by the addition of the real-life ideal woman of most of his readers, that is of the purdah woman; and this is largely to negate the object with which the character was introduced. It is noticeable that Sarshār seems to have felt the need to yield to his readers' tastes in this last respect more and more. By the time he reaches volume four we find Ḥusn Arā even being rebuked by her cousin for the degree of freedom which she allows herself, and when she and Āzād are at last married it is very largely in accordance with traditional conventions. Āzād, who at the beginning of the story had been shown as a man without family ties now suddenly produces the full quota of relations whose involvement in the marriage is necessary by the traditional standards; and all the traditional ceremonies are not only observed, but are described with

approval. In the very last mention of Ḥusn Arā, Sarshār considers it necessary to stress her absolute respectability, relating how after her marriage she established in her own house a girls' school for daughters of the nobility and gentry, where they could come to learn reading and sewing. Ḥusn Arā put the school under the supervision of Miss Maida. Since she was the daughter of a Nawwab and connected with the royal family and the general opinion of her character was very high, and people swore by her chastity, no one felt the slightest hesitation in sending his daughters to the school.¹

In short Ḥusn Arā is so incongruous and unconvincing a figure that her propagandist value is greatly diminished, and whatever appeal anyone of her aspects had for any one section of readers must have been diminished by their disapproval of the other aspects.

With the new light as a whole, and Āzād as its standard-bearer, Sarshār's difficulties were less acute. Nevertheless they were real enough. Sarshār felt that a great deal could be achieved by direct preaching, but he felt also the greater effectiveness of the method of realistic narrative which he used to such effect in portraying the old order. The difficulty here was that the old order was a tangible reality which he knew intimately, and which, despite his genuine contempt for its more obviously decadent features,

1. Vol.IV, p.1071.

he loved more deeply than perhaps he himself realised. Thus his portrayals are wonderfully vivid and convincing. But it was impossible for him to paint so vivid, convincing and attractive a picture of the new society which he advocated, because he was trying to portray something which had not yet come into existence and about which even his own ideas were sometimes rather vague. The hero who typifies the new order is therefore necessarily a rather insubstantial figure, and an insubstantial figure necessarily lacks the power to engage the strong sympathies that he must evoke if he is to fulfil his role.

Once again, therefore, Sarshār is driven to other measures to enhance Āzād's appeal, and once again he adopts the obvious solution of endowing him with the qualities of the dāstān hero, supplemented by the qualities of the kind of sophisticated man-about-town who appealed to contemporary Lucknow. But the qualities of these two figures at best have little relation to the values of the new light, and at worst run counter to them.

Once we have grasped the nature of Sarshār's difficulties and the logic of the situation into which they led him we should no longer feel surprised to find that Āzād has much more than would at first appear in common with Khojī. If we compare the two characters three main points emerge. Āzād contrasts with Khojī in that he is too

enlightened to share Khojī's attachment to the more obviously contemptible aspects of the old order. He contrasts with him also (and in this case the contrast is favourable to Khojī) in lacking the vaz'adārī which is the source of Khojī's staunchness and devotion. But there are other respects in which his outlook and Khojī's are virtually identical, and where this is so, we find that the outlook derives entirely from the values of the old order which Azād was created to attack. This aspect of Azād is most strikingly evidenced in his attitude to women. Azād the conscious standard-bearer of the new light preaches all the right things on the question of the relation between the sexes - women should have the same opportunities as men for all-round education and cultural development; they should have the right to mix freely with men on terms of mutual respect; they should be free to choose their own husbands; they should be entitled to demand that just as a woman may have only one husband, so must a man have only one wife; and so on. But Azād in action reveals that these are far from being his invariable guiding values. He and Khojī are in perfect harmony in the attitude that every young woman is a legitimate object of a man's amorous attentions, and there is nothing to show that either of them has any idea that any moral obligation to the woman is thereby incurred. (We noted earlier that Azād's extreme susceptibility to women's charms

emerges very early in the story. It is significant that even so negative a character as Chammī Jān is shown early in volume one trying to restrain him from making a complete fool of himself.) Azād and Khojī have other things in common too. Azād's relation to the Nawab whose service he enters is indistinguishable from that of Khojī and the other courtiers. He cheats and exploits him as shamelessly as they do, and Sarshār nowhere indicates his disapproval of such behaviour. His cheating of the moneylender is similarly regarded, by implication, as quite permissible, and it is significant that this is Sarshār's attitude not only at the time when he is relating this incident but later also when he is discussing it with a correspondent.¹ The completely amoral standards by which a man can be judged are also in evidence, and both Azād and Husn Arā seem to consider it quite proper to judge whether a man is a suitable life-partner by whether or not he is able to compose extempore chronograms. It is obvious that when Sarshār endows his hero with such characteristics, presenting them at best without comment and at worst in a favourable light, it is not the new light which benefits but the old.

Thus Fasāna i Azād's loss of effectiveness as a propagandist work is due in some measure to the practical problems which Sarshār had to face in adapting his material

1. cf. p. 149 above.

to his audience. He had the good sense to see that it was pointless for him to preach the new light unless he could gain a wide hearing for what he had to say. To gain a hearing, he relied largely upon humour, but clearly this humour had to be of a kind agreeable to his readers' taste. He similarly had to meet their taste in traditional prose narrative, their taste in literary style, and, most dangerous of all, their standards of judgement by which they determined whether their attitude to a character would be favourable or unfavourable; and clearly he could not do all this without some blurring of the clear ideals which he had set out to put before his readers.

But this practical problem of adapting his material to his audience to the extent necessary to gain their approval is not the fundamental cause of the contradiction in the values which Fasana i Azād presents. The fundamental cause is the substantial measure of ambiguity in Sarshār's own outlook. The book reveals to us that Sarshār's enthusiastic modernism was not so deeply rooted as the enthusiasm might lead us to believe. His choice of name for his hero is significant. He is a man who wants to be "free"; he seems to be against the old order as such, but when we look more closely we see that he is against all those aspects of it which restrict him and which he therefore finds irksome. He seems to be for the new light as such, but in fact he stresses

those new ideas which allow him greater freedom of action and has little to say of those which lay obligations upon him. The point was made in an earlier section that Āzād in this respect resembles many of the champions of the new light of Sarshār's day. It must now be added that he also resembles Sarshār himself. Āzād is indeed, in essence, a fairly faithful portrait of his creator. Sarshār had grown up in the traditional atmosphere of old Lucknow, and it is pretty clear that he enjoyed all the pleasures it could offer; his own proficiency in the accomplishments which old Lucknow admired (knowledge of the traditional literature, both poetry and prose, command of language, both colloquial and ornately stylised, quickness of wit and humour, and so on) brought him an admiration which he enjoyed, and led him to approve these accomplishments with a warmth which his conscious reforming self did not care to explain, but which nevertheless emerges unmistakably in his book. These accomplishment and the attitudes that generally go with them are not necessarily inconsistent with the modern, dynamic outlook which Sarshār the conscious reformer seeks to inculcate; but neither are they indispensable to such an outlook, and still less are they the substitute for more solid qualities which Sarshār sometimes (as in his account of the examination of her suitors which Ḥusn Arā conducts) represents them to be. In Sarshār's very humour - a quality for which he is most

generally admired - there is a strong element of flippancy which drives out seriousness even when it is most needed. We see this in miniature in one of his early articles in Avadh Akhbār, where he writes of the swarms of beggars which infest Lucknow. When he begins his article he is seriously concerned with the social problem which they represent, but he goes on to describe the way they beg, and begins by writing of a man who has a large repertoire of abusive epithets and invites passers-by to hear them at a pice a time. The picture is vividly drawn and by this time Sarshār is laughing at the man's impudence and ingenuity and we are laughing with him; and he himself has dissipated the serious attention which we were invited to bring to the problem. In Fasāna i Āzād too this happens again and again. This sort of humour inhibits not only all serious thought but every deep emotion, and this too weakens the impact of Sarshār's message.

For all these reasons Fasāna i Āzād, considered as a propagandist novel, cannot be regarded as an unqualified success, and to this extent Sarshār must be judged to have failed in what was to him his most important aim. Fortunately there are other yardsticks for measuring the worth of the book which are no less valid than this, and which must be employed in making any worthwhile overall assessment.

(iv) Sarshār's Achievement

We have seen that Sarshār advanced bold claims for Fasāna i Azād declaring that it was a modern novel conforming to European standards and a realistic work which rejected all elements that were not true to nature. It would be unjust to Sarshār to dismiss these claims out of hand and to classify his book as essentially just another dāstān; but it would be equally unjust to take his claims at their face value and then to condemn Fasāna i Azād because it does not fully measure up to them. Unfortunately many modern critics have committed one or other of these mistakes. Thus both Saksena and Suhrawardī tend to judge it by the standards of the modern novel; they stress the absence of any real plot in Fasāna i Azād and criticize it accordingly.¹ On the other hand Muḥammad Aḥsan Fārūqī repeatedly stresses its resemblance to Rajab 'Alī Beg Sarār's Fasāna i 'Ajāib. Some of his statements exaggerate this resemblance in a way which is quite inexcusable. Thus he writes:

یہ کہنا غلط نہ ہو گا کہ شعور ری غور
 پر سرشار شانہ عجائب کی سی چیز آگے
 اسے حق مگر آگے عظمت اچھیں
 آجیب نے من کی طرف کے جا رہی
 تحقیق

1. cf. Saksena, op.cit., p.332 and Suhrawardī, op.cit., p.32.
 2. Muntakhābāt i Adab, ed. Iḥtishām Ḥusain and Ghulam Rabbānī Tābān, Delhi, 1951, p.169.

"It would not be wrong to say that Sarshār consciously aimed at writing a work on the lines of Fasāna i 'Ajāib, but his temperament led him in the direction of a new art."

This statement is open to more objections than can be discussed here, and is the more remarkable because Sarshār himself in a passage at the beginning of volume four of Fasāna i Azād goes out of his way to compare his book with Sarūr's and, though paying tribute to Sarūr, to claim that Fasāna i Azād is something new in Urdu literature because it is written along the lines of the English novel.¹

We can make a just assessment of Fasāna i Azād only if we are content to accept it for what it is and not regard it either as an unsuccessful attempt to write a dāstān or as an unsuccessful attempt to write a novel. An author is not necessarily the best judge of what he has achieved, and if his achievement is not exactly what he claimed it to be, it is nevertheless impressive enough.

We may accept at once the valid criticisms which modern writers have levelled against it. It is perfectly true that Fasāna i Azād is neither a dāstān nor a modern novel, that it is a long rambling, uneven work with only a nominal plot and with many strands which are not really woven into the texture of a unified whole. It is also true that there are defects in the work which arise partly from Sarshār's

1. Vol.IV, p.3 of the 1915 edition. However, this passage is for some reason not found in all editions.

awareness of the need to compromise with the traditional tastes of his readers and even more from the ambiguity in his own standards which led him sometimes to identify himself with these tastes even though they did not accord with his own conscious standards in literature or with the demands of his own natural talent for realism. But when all this is said, we have only stated in what respect Sarshār falls short of the standards which he set himself. It is much more important to assess the extent to which he succeeds.

It is convenient to begin with an examination of the talents and the techniques which he brought to his task. First comes his wonderful command over language. The enormous range of his vocabulary and the way in which he can write with complete ease of the immense variety of subjects which he covers puts him in a class by himself among writers of Urdu prose. It is true that his exuberant flair for language often leads him into passages of high-flown, ornate writing in the style of the fasāna where he would have done better to adopt a plainer and less traditional style. It is as though he knew how this style appealed to men of more traditional taste, and, knowing that he could write it quite effortlessly, could not resist the temptation to do so. This has led such critics as Dr. Fārūqī to assert that his style is identical and with that of Rajab 'Alī Beg Sarūr.¹ It is surprising

1. op.cit., p.165.

that a contemporary writer could give such an assessment of Sarshār's style. Chakbast dealt very justly with this facile comparison long ago,¹ and rightly said that the publication of Fasāna i Azād relegated Fasāna i 'Ajāib to the status of a museum piece which men could go to examine if they wished to see how Urdu prose was once written. There is no doubt that although there is in Fasāna i Azād no dearth of passages to show that Sarshār is as much a master of traditional style as Sarūr, his own authentic style is that of the vivid, racy Lucknow colloquial which he had made his own. As Chakbast rightly says, while Sarūr's style labours under the burden of its artificiality, Sarshār's has all the lightness and sparkle of informal conversation. When Sarshār himself claims that his language was essentially that of everyday speech he is asserting no more than the truth. 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar very rightly gave prominence to this ^{point}~~part~~ in the chronogram which he composed to mark the publication of Fasāna i Azād.

This command of language is nowhere more evident than in the passages of dialogue which form so large a part of the whole work. Sarshār knew how well he could write dialogue, and he uses this talent to the full, nearly always

1. op.cit., p.3.

2. Quoted in Mazāmīn i Chakbast, p. 38-39

bringing out points that he wants to make by making them the subject of discussion between two or more characters. He knew exactly the forms of speech, the special vocabulary and the characteristic style and tone appropriate to each of the wide range of characters of different classes and different areas whom he introduces in his pages. The number of characters who appear in Fasāna i Azād is enormous, yet all seem quite distinctive. There are many occasions when Sarshār writes about courtesans and dancing-girls, but in spite of the characteristics common to all of them, they are different from one another and every one of them can be recognised and in this it is distinctive dialogue that plays the major part. The same can be said about all those courtiers who are strewn through the pages of Fasāna i Azād. All come from the same class; all follow the same way of life, trying to live on their wits; but we are made to feel that every one of them has his own individuality. Very often these characters have nothing much to do with the main thread of the work as a whole, but where they do their dialogue becomes a most effective method of strengthening the delineation of their characters. Khojī would not be Khojī but for the way Sarshār shows him speaking in all the manifold situations in which he appears. Sarshār's talent for realistic description is now generally acknowledged, and when we look closely to see how this power is achieved we very often find that ninety per

cent of it is due to the brilliance of the dialogue alone. One detailed illustration will suffice. The first episode in the passage referred to earlier where the young courtesan is shown exercising her tyranny over her nawāb occupies a little less than the two columns of a quarto page. Of the total of forty-five lines, no less than thirty-one are dialogue, and only in the remaining fourteen is there description and comment. And the description it gives only the barest essentials. The scene is set in seven lines:

یہ نعتلو تو پورہی تھی کہ آیت ڈکڑی کھڑ ٹھٹھرائی
 سوئی آئی اور الپ سے آیت نیک بخت لہڑان
 در بائی اتریں نہ نیک بخت کا ہو کو بد بخت
 کئی۔ خراب سبکی نظر طرف ہے۔ چھوٹا حجم
 کی آواز سے شور برپا کیا اور نواب عاصب تو
 ریشہ فطمی ہو گئے۔ اور پتلی کھر لپکتی ہوئی
 شریف لائیں۔ اور نواب نا مدار نے
 سب شرفاء سے برتر مقام پر اٹھو گئے
 دی۔ اسے نواب کا سذر کھینٹا اور بڑے
 ٹھٹھے سے منہان ہوئی

"While they were talking a carriage came clattering up and a good lady alighted from it displaying all the power of her charms. (Good lady? Say bad lady, rather.) All eyes turned towards her as the clanking of her jewellery drew nearer and the nawāb became all humble solicitude to receive her. She made her entrance with hips swaying, and our

renowned nawab prepared a seat for her above all his noble courtiers. She pulled the cushion from behind him and sat down in all her glory." 1

Later Sarshār interrupts the dialogue simply to remark that when the nawāb calls for an attendant "about eighteen servants answered." Brief touches such as these are all that he needs. When we study the passage we are surprised to find that the woman who dominates the whole scene has not even been described except by the brief hints in the opening sentence quoted above. It is the dialogue almost alone which has conveyed the whole scene so vividly - the courtesan's youthful vigour, her pride in her beauty and in the complete power which it gives her over the foolish nawāb, her shrewdness in exploiting this power to get the maximum advantage out of him, the senseless extravagance of nawab's way of life, the sycophancy of his courtiers, and finally the thoughtless way in which they are prepared to teach a little child obscene language and greed for money simply in order to provide themselves with a few moments' amusement.

Yet when he feels the need Sarshār is fully capable of writing directly descriptive passages which are no less effective. There is an episode in volume one where the same nawāb receives a telegram to which a reply has to be sent.

1. Vol.I, p.425.

This task is entrusted to a courtier named Miyān Nudrat.

Sarshār describes his consternation:

میاں نذرت لکھنؤ کے آدمی وہ بھی پرانے
 فن سے خاص سے باہر عمر بھر قدم رکھا ہی نہیں
 وہ تیبھائیں کہ تار گھر کس بلا کا نام ہے
 قہر درویش بر جان درویش سپر چلے تو
 آیت آیت سے پوچھتے جاتے ہیں کہ
 ایوں بھئی تار گھر کہاں ہے۔۔۔ آخڑ
 آیت چیرا سی نے کہا کہ کل ہی برف
 کی کل سے سامنے ہے۔ بھائی ہم کل کی
 برف ورف تو جانتے نہیں بد بتاؤ
 کہ ادھر خاص ادھر پاٹا ناہ ادو
 پھر سعادت بٹخ ہے کس رخ جاس
 بڑے کھنڈے۔۔۔ اور تار گھر میں
 خدا جاے تیا واردات ہو۔ ذری انگریزی
 ٹاٹون واٹون سے ہم واقف بھی نہیں دیکھتے
 آئے تیا افتاد پڑتی ہے۔ خیر خدا مات ہے
 چلے تو دھنیا مہری کے پل پر ہو رہے۔ لیدھا
 راکتہ چھوڑا اور نا لہ کی راہی۔۔۔۔۔
 ۔۔۔۔۔ میں گئے میں آیت باجو لڑک پر

کھڑے تھے انے پو چھا باجو جی تار گھر
 کہاں ہے۔ انھوں نے کہا سائے ہے
 چلے جاؤ۔ پھر پلٹے باجو جی۔ ایک روپیہ
 لایا سول اور لکھو انا یر ہے کہ آج عید
 سینوں آتی ہے۔ صل شیعوں آتی ہو گی
 بھلا وہاں بیٹھا رہوں جب جنر پہنچ جائے
 واپس آؤں۔ باجو نے کہا ایا جرد رہیں
 جیتر تار گھڑی کو ٹھی میں داخل ہو گئے
 تو پیچہ دھک دھک کر رہا ہے۔ دیکھئے
 جان کیو نکر پکتی ہے۔ خدا جانے کیا اقتاد
 پڑے۔ ہاتھی چھوٹے۔ گھوڑا چھوٹے
 گھوڑی دیرت بچاٹ پر کھڑے رہی
 اور وہاں سے مارے ڈرے بیرت واپس
 راہ میں دلوں روپیئے تو انھوں نے بھٹائے
 اور بیوی آئیئے پیچہ میل مٹھائی کی چٹلیں لے چلے
 راستے بھر ہی سو چنے رہی کہ نواب ملدھب
 سے یوں پکھ چلیں گے۔ یوں بھٹا دیں

کے

"Miyān Nudrat was a Lucknow man, and an old-fashioned one at that. He had never put a foot outside Nakhkhās [one of the muhallas of Lucknow]. How would he know anything about the telegraph office? Well, there was nothing for it but to set out, asking everyone he met, 'Friend, where is the telegraph office?'

[Sarshār then reports the facetious answers of a baker, a braid-maker and a barber.]

At last a messenger told him, 'It's opposite the ice factory'. Nudrat replied, 'Friend, I don't know any ice factory. Listen. Nakhkhās is this way; Pātā Nāla is that way; and Sa'ādatganj is that way. Which way do I go? What a fix I'm in! And God knows what will happen in the telegraph office. I don't know the first thing about the English law. I wonder what will happen to me? Well, God will decide! He set off again but missed the direct route and went off the wrong way.... When he got to Husainganj he saw a babu [a Bengali] standing in the street and asked him where the telegraph office was. The babu told him to keep straight on. He started off but turned back to say, 'Babu jī, I have one Rupee (1) and I have to get them ^{and} to write that the sunnis celebrate 'Id today ^{and} of the Shias tomorrow. Do I have to wait there until the message gets to the other end before I come away?' 'No', the babu replied, 'that's not necessary.' Well, he got to the telegraph building and went up to the gate with his heart thumping, wondering whether he would ever come out alive. 'God alone knows what might happen', he thought to himself. He hesitated in the gateway for a while and then felt so frightened that he turned straight round and was off like a shot. On the way back he got change for both the rupees, bought a little basket of assorted sweets for his wife, and went on his way thinking up what story he would tell the Nawab." (2)

and

1. Actually he had two.
2. Vol.I, p.449.

In passages like these we see to what effect Sarshār uses his accomplishments. We begin by laughing at Nudrat, and we go on laughing at him; yet it is not long before we begin to realise that he is not only amusing but also more than a little pathetic, and that, more than this, he is not only Miyān Nudrat but also the representative of a large class of little men who have never experienced anything but the old ways of life and are bewildered and frightened by the great changes which they see taking place around them. The passing reference to the English law which Sarshār puts into Nudrat's mouth is a masterly touch, and conveys in a few words the essence of the situation which Sarshār discusses explicitly elsewhere, the situation in which Indians were confronted with a system of justice which was incomprehensible to them and yet which seemed to affect even the most everyday occurrences in their lives. When he writes like this Sarshār enables us not only to see with him and to laugh with him at the inadequacies of the old order, but also to understand in very human terms the real problems which faced the men and women of his time as a result of its rapid decay and its replacement by something new and strange.

It is the unforgettable picture of mid-nineteenth-century Lucknow which Fasāna i Azād gives us which ensures its immortality. One sees how powerful was the spell which Lucknow cast over its citizens when one considers that three

men so different as Sarshār, Ruswā and Sharar all felt inspired to preserve in their work the picture of what it had been; and the point strikes us all the more forcibly, when we reflect that all three of these men were convinced supporters of the new light and fully able to see what was rotten in the old order. The uniqueness of Sarshār's contribution lies in the vastness of his canvas and in the vividness of the colours in which he paints it. Ruswā is in many ways a more consummate artist and certainly a more penetrating thinker, but if the depth of his portrait of Lucknow in Umrāo Jān Adā is greater than Sarshār's, his range is incomparably more restricted. Sharar deliberately aims at comprehensiveness, describing in essay after essay every distinct feature of old Lucknow life that he can think of. But Sarshār is as comprehensive as he, and while Sharar's book is largely a descriptive catalogue of things, Sarshār's is a wonderful collection of living people, drawn from every walk of life in Lucknow society, with all their characteristic attitudes and human strengths and failings.

It is as though Sarshār saw the old Lucknow order as a dying old man whose weaknesses and vices were only too well known to him and had often driven him near to desperation, but whom he had known all his life and whose nearness to death roused in him all the latent sympathy which one feels for such a man. Now that he must say farewell

he feels that he owes him a debt that he must pay, and because he must at the same time remain true to himself he does so by creating for posterity a portrait of the old man in which for the most part his faults are not concealed or excused but in which also the indefinable ways in which the old man had established his kinship with him are also somehow expressed. The fact that his enormous book has been repeatedly reprinted and is still read with pleasure and love is sufficient evidence of the greatness of his achievement.

CHAPTER VI

FASANA I JADID (JAM I SARSHAR)

Long before Fasāna i Azād was finished, Sarshār had begun work on another book, to which he at first gave the title Fasāna i Jadīd (A Modern Tale). He began it at a time when he was at the peak of his popularity; he had finished one volume of Fasāna i Azād and his readers were clamouring for a second.¹ Because of its success, Avadh Akhbār was flourishing, and Sarshār's creative power was at its zenith. He was not only the editor of the paper, but probably the author of the greater part of each issue; but with all these commitments he undertook the writing of a new novel. Like Fasāna i Azād, this too was to be printed serially, and the first instalment appeared in the issue of Avadh Akhbār dated 19th June 1880, and four more, each of about 2,000 words, followed in successive issues. The new novel proved extremely popular, and after five instalments had appeared, it was decided to print it as a separate supplement to the paper. Accordingly, on 6th July 1880, the manager Sheo Parshād announced that from the following week the instalments would appear as separate supplements of twelve to sixteen pages, and that from the beginning of August readers who wished to receive them would be required to pay an extra charge of eight

1. cf. Avadh Akhbār, issue of 7th July 1880.

annas a month. Despite this extra charge the supplements sold well, and demand continued long after all supplies had been exhausted. In this situation Sarshār was approached by Munshi Nawal Kishor with a proposal that he should co-operate with Pandit Mādho Parshād to revise the novel for publication in book form. Mādho Parshād after explaining this situation in his epilogue to the new version, continues:

پمڈت صاحب نے اس ناول کی ترمیم
اور نظر تانی میرے ساتھ کی اور آگے
اکثر حصے بدل دیئے اور عنوان دراند
کو دور کر کے آگے سے پیرائے ہیں
ناول لکھا اور اسکا نام جہاں سرشار
رکھا

"Pandit Ratan Nāth revised it with my collaboration with me. He changed it in many parts, removed superfluous passages, and gave it a new form, entitling it Jām-i-Sarshār." 1

The title page of the copy I have used bears the date 1887, and I have not been able to find any other evidence of the date of publication.

It is unfortunately not possible to ascertain how extensive was the revision which transformed Fasāna i Jadīd into Jām i Sarshār for only the five instalments which appear

in the columns of Avadh Akhbār are now available, and I have been unable to discover any library which possesses the supplements in which the remainder of the novel appeared. Nor is it possible to be sure of the date at which the first version of the novel was completed. We can at best make an approximate estimate. The first five instalments correspond to the first ⁵⁰ pages of the revised re-issue - i.e. about one tenth of the whole book. If this sort of proportion holds good for the rest of the work, there must have been something like another ⁴⁵ ~~30~~ instalments after the first five. These five appeared over a period of ¹⁵ ~~37~~ days (~~3 months~~) and assuming the same rate of issue for the remainder, this would give us a concluding date of somewhere about ^{November 1880.} _h The assumptions on which this calculation is based cannot of course be proved, but they seem reasonable, and Mādho Parshād's statement that the parts of the novel had become unobtainable at the time that its revision and re-issue were undertaken is consistent with it.

The outline of the book which in its present form occupies just under 500 pages is as follows. The central character is a young Lucknow nawab, Amīn ^{ud} dīn Haidar. He had been brought up very strictly, but a time came when his father grew old, and felt that he must retire and hand over the reins to his son. The courtiers saw their opportunity and gathered around him. One day they persuaded him to go to see two newly-

arrived Jewish dancing girls performing. The nawab went with a rich Hindu friend Seth Gūjar Mal, and the two of them were so impressed by the girls' beauty that they sent for them and within a single evening spent thousands of rupees on them.

This was the beginning of a regular liason. One day the nawab was going to see them, and, impatient to reach his destination, he ordered the coachman to drive faster. At great speed the coach came upon a potter who was carrying a very heavy load of earthenware pots. Heavily loaded as he was, he could not move out of the way quickly enough, and was knocked down, injuring his leg. The nawāb was very frightened by this incident, and he later ordered his courtiers to go and find out if the potter was badly hurt. In fact he was not, but the courtiers returned and gave a very exaggerated account of his injuries. The nawāb was scared, and told them to go at once to consult a lawyer. He told them that the offence was not a very serious one, but the courtiers saw their chance to rob the nawāb and extracted large sums of money on the pretext of paying legal fees to fight the case.

The day his coachman was summoned to the court the nawāb was greatly agitated. His courtiers who were themselves addicted to drinking, took this opportunity to initiate their master, telling him that wine would help him to forget his worries. From this time he got into the habit of drinking heavily.

One day he sent for a village dancing girl named Farkhunda to come and entertain some of his friends who were very eager to see her. During her performance all of them drank heavily, and the noise they made attracted the attention of the nawāb's wife, who could survey the whole scene from her window. The nawāb's father also came to know of the nawab's disgraceful conduct and gave him an ultimatum that he must break with his bad habits or leave the house. The nawab was so offended that he left the house of his own accord and went to live with his friend Nuṣrat ud Daulah, who had a house which stood in a large garden. There he made the village dancing-girl his mistress.

His courtiers now brought fresh troubles upon him. They brought him a pony and persuaded him to buy it. After doing so he discovered that it was stolen property. Once again he was very frightened, especially when, in spite of all his attempts to prove himself innocent, the district magistrate issued a warrant for his arrest. Fortunately his father got wind of what had happened and was able to save him. This incident brought the nawāb and his father together again.

One day his wife heard of an affair he was having with another woman. When the nawāb came home he found her very angry. He made things worse by joking with her and her maid-servant Zahūran, with whom he had long been accustomed

to flirt. The begam lost her temper, and turned Zahūran out of the house. A short time afterwards the nawāb traced her whereabouts and married her, giving her the title of Nawab Hūr Laqā Mahal.

Seth Gūjar Mal now gave a feast in honour of the nawāb. A recently-arrived English entertainer and his young English woman assistant had been summoned for the occasion. Seth jī fell in love with this young woman and ran away with her to another city.

The nawāb's friend Nuṣrat-ud daula had great faith in magic and astrology and was eager to learn them. One day an English astrologer came and offered to teach him, and Nuṣrat ud daula employed him. He also ^{despatched} instructed two of his courtiers to Kamachia Kamrūp[Assam], the legendary country of magicians. The two of them went to Calcutta, ⁺ on various ₁ pretexts, succeeded in robbing him of a lot of money.

One day the English astrologer made his employer drunk and persuaded him to sign an English document giving him authority to draw out all his money from the bank. He drew the money and then disappeared, leaving Nuṣrat ud daula penniless. Soon after he too disappeared without a trace.

Some considerable time later Seth Ji returned with the English girl, but he had become an alcoholic. The nawāb saw the English girl and felt greatly attracted to her; and after some time she left the Seth and went to live with the

nawab. Hūr Laqa Maḥal (Zahūran) came to hear of this, whereupon she left him and became a prostitute. When the nawab learned this he got drunk and went and killed her; and later, when he realised the seriousness of his crime, committed suicide by drowning himself in a lake.

No over-all comparison of Jām i Sarshār with the earlier version is now possible, but comparison of the early chapters with the first five instalments of Fasāna i Jadīd shows that at any rate in this part of the work revisions were fairly substantial, and represented an improvement. In the earlier version Seth jī, who is a very important character in Jām i Sarshār, does not play a very important role. An instalment published on 3rd July 1880, does not appear in Jām i Sarshār at all. The dialogue of the courtiers is changed considerably, and the scene where the nawāb's coachman appears in court is also changed. The most important change of all relates to Nawab Amīn ud dīn Ḥaidar himself. In the original version, Sarshār introduces him thus:

آیہ نواب والا تبار دی وقتا رکو جناب
باری نے فرزند عطا کیا تھا اور دولت
و ثروت سے بھی مالا مال کیا تھا اس
فرزند جبر پیرو نہ کا سکندر تخت نام
تھا۔ باب کا حاصل زندگی اور دل

ماد کا آرام تھا - بابت پٹے میں لائق
 اور شتی بنوٹ میں شاق تھا - بڑھا
 اپنے پدر بزرگوار اور عالی وقار کے قدم
 بقدم با وضع با بروٹ - فایق اور لقا
 شریف تھا - علم و فضل کی یہ نسبت کہ
 سنہ برس میں صاحب تصنیف تھا
 شعر و سخن کا دی شوق تھا - شاعر
 اور مذاکرے میں جانے کا از بس ذوق
 تھا - کتب بینی میں محقق تام تھا - دن
 رات پڑھنے لکھنے کا کام تھا -

مادر کا آرام تھا۔ ایک بیٹے میں طلاق اور
 کشتی بیوٹ میں شاق تھا۔ لڑکا اپنے
 بدر بزرگوار اور عالی وقار کے قدم لقدم
 با وضع با مروت خلیق اور کچا شریف تھا
 علم و عمل کی یہ کیفیت کہ لنگرہ بدری ہاں
 ساعب تعریف تھا۔ شعر و سخن کا دلی
 شوق تھا شاہکارے اور مناظرے میں
 جانے کا از بس ذوق تھا۔
 کتب بینی میں عشق تام تھا۔
 دن پڑھنے لکھنے ہی کا کام
 تھا

There would be little point in attempting a full
 translation of this passage. It is in the traditional fasāna
 style, full of epithets brought in for the sake of rhythm and
 rhyme and to demonstrate a command of the high-flown style.
 Its gist is that ^{he was} the only son of very rich parents, by whom
 he was very much loved.

The boy was expert in fencing, wrestling and quarter-staff. Like his father he was a dignified gentleman. He was so learned that at the age of seventeen he was already an author. He was devoted to poetry, and a regular participant in musha'iras and debates. He was a great lover of books and would spend most of the day and night in study. Thus not only is the language that of the fasāna; the description of the hero too is quite in the fasāna tradition.

By contrast, in Jām i Sarshār the nawab is described as follows:

نواب ہم اقتدار اول تو نام خدا
 اٹھا رہا ایسی برس کی عمر دیکھ
 صاحبِ دل و مقبول - پونہروں کے
 رئیسِ علاقہ دار لاکھوں کے حوایات
 پاس جوانی کی آئیں ریاست
 کی بو -

یہ نواب صاحبِ پڑھے تھے
 نوعاً جیسی تھے - سبکِ طبیعت نور کی
 پالی تھی - آکر تعلیم اچھی پاتے تو
 رزسا کے فخر و افتخار ہوتے
 پندرہ سولہ برس کے سن
 تک تو بڑے حضور یعنی اتنے
 والد بزرگوار نے انکو عجب بد
 میں نہیں بیٹھنے دیا - کیناں مختلف
 عوارض نے انکو ادھ بھرا دیا کہ
 دن بھر میں ہی پڑے رہتے تھے -

ادعز میدان حالی یا کتر معاصول اور رفیعوں
کو یہ سو چھو کہ رئیس زادے کو ڈھکے پر لائیں
خوب عجبیں کتر مائیں - اور رئیس کو اس
رباعی کے سفیوسم کا مصداق بیاہیں
ص . صبح تو عام کے کزرتی ہے - شب دلا رام کے کزرتی ہے
حافیت کی خبر خدا جانے - اب تو آرام کے کزرتی ہے

"The noble nawāb was eighteen or nineteen years old. Moreover he was very rich - heir to the wealth of generations, and owner of jewels worth thousands. The longings of youth, and the atmosphere of a noble family. He was not very well educated, but he was very intelligent and if he had had a good education he would have been the pride of his peers. Until he was fifteen or sixteen his father had never allowed him to mingle in bad company, but various ailments had made him a very weak boy and he had grown used to spending all his time in the women's section of the house. When his courtiers and companions saw that the field was clear they formed the plan of bringing the young nobleman into line... so that his way of life would exemplify the ruba'ī: 'The morning passes in drinking and the evening in pleasure. God knows how it will all end, but today we enjoy life.'" 1

It is interesting to compare the two passages. In the second passage the ornate, rhyming prose has been abandoned. The description is more realistic, and the language reflects this change. Persianised words and passages give way to simple colloquial expressions like,

1. p.161.

بہ نٹروں کے رئیس - طسعت نورانی
 بائی تھی - ادب مرا کر دیا - ڈکھڑے
 بر لائیں

The characterisation is also significantly different. In place of the old-style fasāna hero who has mastered all the accomplishments, physical and mental, before he is seventeen, we have a credible character, and a description of the circumstances of his upbringing which will help to explain realistically the faults which later develop in him.

In general, the characterisation represents an advance on Fasāna i Azād in that all of the characters are credible. The contrast between the young, weak-willed, spoiled young nawāb and his father is well drawn. The old man has all the virtues of the old order, and his one flaw is that in his anxiety that his son should be protected from evil influences he makes him too dependent, so that once the father is no longer able to regulate his life for him he is lost. The old nawāb is shown as both an affectionate father, despite his strictness, and a capable man of affairs; moreover he is one who can find a way out of the difficulties that confront him without sacrificing his principles or his self-respect. When his son gets into really deep water over the affair of the stolen pony he hurries to him the moment

he hears of it:

برای فکر رنجی کا اصلاح خیال
 نہ کیا۔۔۔۔۔ خدا مانتے ہو - خدا
 مانتے ہے - کچھ کعبرا نے کی
 بات نہیں ہے - دیکھو میں ابھی
 فکر کرتا ہوں -

"He gave not a thought to the old unpleasantness between them ... 'God will provide, God will provide. There is nothing to get upset about. It's alright. I'll do something about it at once.'" 1

He does not even hint to him that he had brought all his troubles upon himself by giving way to his weaknesses and consorting with bad company. His interview with the District Commissioner establishes his dignity and tact. He is very worried about his son, but when he goes to see the Commissioner he does not show it, and neither does he plead for favours. Without humiliating himself he conveys his request to the commissioner - in other words, shows that he possesses the old-fashioned accomplishment of husn i talab.

He describes the incident to his son:

اب اسی شہر سے بھارا چل چلاؤ
 ہے - اب ہمیں اور دور جا کر رہیں
 جو چھائیوں کیوں بیوں یہ کیا بات ہے
 میں نے کہا - جی اب یہاں نہیں رہیں

تو کسی شہر سے بہت اصرار لیا کہ
 نہیں بناؤ اور ضرور بتائے۔
 اور جلد بتائے۔ میں نے اگلے دن
 بیان کی۔ وارنٹ کا نام سنتے ہی
 کسی سے آٹھ گھنٹے ہوئے
 اور کہا۔ ہم الیڈم مقدمہ
 اپنے یہاں منتقل کر لیں گے

"The moment I saw him I said, 'I cannot stay in this city now. I shall go and live somewhere else, far away.' 'Why?' he said, 'Why? What's the matter?' I said, 'I just don't want to live here any more - and if I did how could I show my face here?' He pressed me to tell him what was wrong. 'No, you must tell me. Tell me at once.' Then I told him the whole story. As soon as I mentioned the word 'warrant' he jumped to his feet ... and said, 'I shall have the case transferred to my own jurisdiction this very moment....'" 1

It is significant that his daughter-in-law, the young nawāb's wife is also shown in a most admirable light. She lives by the standards on which the womenfolk of the old society prided themselves and which Sarshār deeply admired. Throughout his work they are drawn both with admiration and sympathy. He clearly felt that in a society in which so many of their menfolk had lost all the traditional virtues, they still upheld the qualities of loyalty, sincerity, courage

and dignity. They are conscious of the faults of their menfolk, and in their own way they try to rescue them from bad company, which they see as the cause of their degeneration. Whatever the men do, they remain unspoilt and ever ready to forgive.

Sarshār is in no way exceptional in portraying these qualities in them. We find this attitude towards women of good families in most Urdu writers. But Sarshār's portrayal has in addition an element which the others lack. All of his heroines are beautiful. They are not just wives who keep the family united, but also women who love their men and are not ashamed to show it. At the same time they long to be loved by them. Sarshār always describes their appearance in great detail. The relations between husband and wife are also much more romantically portrayed than ⁱⁿ any other novel of Sarshār's times. In short, Sarshār's heroine is not only an admirable, but also a romantic figure. He is the only novelist of his day who ventures to portray chaste women loving and being loved. Such themes were not considered seemly in his day, and he showed boldness and courage in doing so. Nazīr Aḥmad's heroines are either paragons of wifely virtue or the reverse. Sharār's appear only in his fanciful historical novels, where the scene is laid in centuries past. Even Ruswā, the greatest realist of them all, does not portray the purdah woman in this situation.

The choṭī begam - the young nawab's wife - is an excellent example of Sarshār's treatment. Returning home at night after an absence of many days spent in other amusements, her husband finds her apparently asleep. (Actually she is only pretending.) Sarshār describes the scene:!

”حضرت پر پہنچے تو دیکھا کہ اتنی چاہتی
 بیوی آیت نازک مسہری پر خواب
 نازنین ہیں۔ فرشتے صاف ہیں
 بعد کاہر۔ نر آلف کا بہ عالم کہ سائے
 سے بھی کمر لگائے۔ چھوٹی بیگم
 گلبدن کا پانچا نہ سینے میں اور بعد
 بار یک تنزیب کا ڈوپٹہ کھینک کر
 آدھا مسہری کے داہیں طرف لٹکایا تھا
 زلف پریشاں تلیہ پیر بکھری ہوئی تھی
 کچھ بال بل کھائے گوری گوری
 گردن سے ارد گرد کا لی ناگن کی
 طرح بہا رہی تھی

The description is largely cast in the stock language of the fasāna, and need not be translated here. But the general effect is vivid, and we feel the romantic emotions appropriate to the scene of the beautiful young wife lying apparently fast asleep and unaware of her husband's presence, her long, dishevelled black hair spread on her pillow and

contrasting with the whiteness of her neck.

She is shown avowing her love for him without any embarrassment and without any cheapness:

میں تو تم پر جان دوں - تمہاری تصویر
تنب کی دن میں سینکڑوں باری بلائیں
لوں -

"I pledge my life to you, I declare my devotion even to your picture a hundred times a day." 1

She has all the qualities to inspire love: she is beautiful, young and intelligent. But her most outstanding quality is her dignity, and one feels it in her every mood - when she is angry, when she is happy and joking - and in all her dealings with her husband and his relations. Sarshār's picture suggests even something like equality in her relationship with her husband. Her husband never attempts to compel her submission, and whenever he angers her it is he who feels the need to yield. It is understandable that she is still his beloved even after his infatuation with the Jewish dancing-girls and his designs on Z̤ahūran, and Sarshār uses of her the vocabulary appropriate to this position. When after the breach with his father, her husband leaves home and goes to live with Nuṣrat ud daula, she soon forgets about

1. p.137.

his mistress, the dancing-girl, Farkhunda, and misses him so much that she cannot eat or sleep. Throughout the book she shows the most admirable restraint. When she sees her husband with a dancing-girl she is both hurt and at the same time surprised at his bad taste.¹ But next morning when the nawāb goes to see her she does not complain. Her restraint has very deep roots; it grows out of her self-respect, her shyness, and the long tradition which teaches an Indian woman to control her feelings. But she is very gentle too. When the nawāb reaches home after getting drunk for the first time, she looks after him and tries to hide what has happened from his parents. She does not show the shock and anger which she feels, but waits until he has fully recovered before she reproaches him.² Later on the nawāb gets so drunk that he breaks the head of one of his courtiers, and the begam has to go to the men's section of the house. She finds the nawab lying unconscious, and while she tries to rouse him, she blames not him, but his courtiers for the state he is in.³ When the nawāb, feeling deeply ashamed of himself, and starts weeping, she consoles him

چلو جو ہوا سو ہوا

"Never mind. What's done is done. Don't think about it." 4

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1. p.196.
 2. p.169.
 3. p.334.
 4. p.336.

She is surprised and disdainful at her husband's inability to command the respect of others. After the drunken brawl she says to him:

ہائیں غصہ فدا کا دنگا سا دنگا
 بچا تھا - اور طرہ یہ کہ آپ بیٹھے
 ہیں - وہ ایسے کیا کہ چندے رائے
 دنگا ہو -

"God preserve us! What a disgraceful brawl that was! And the best of it is that you were sitting there. What kind of a nobleman is it in whose presence such brawling can occur?" 1

She herself never allows anyone to behave too familiarly towards her. When Zahūran - who is not only a maid-servant but also a friend and confidant - behaves disrespectfully, the begam turns her out of the house. And when after this incident the nawāb ceases visiting the women's part of the house, she does not lower herself to ask him to come back.² She not only feels worried about the present; she can see what will be the outcome of her husband's new way of life, and she tries to warn him.

تخفہ رے جتنے رشتے ہیں سب ایسے ہی ہیں
 اب یہ ایک بڑھ کر - اتلو تو چن چن کے لگاؤ

1. p.146.
 2. p.346.

دیکھو خدا کو اہل ہے - ایک نہ آیت
 دن آئے ہا محفول نصیب اعدا محنت
 جاتی رہتی

"All your companions are worthless people - every one worse than the last. You should get rid of them, every one ... I tell you, as God is my witness, the day will come when they will bring disgrace upon you" 1

In spite of all this, she does not cease to love her husband. In fact it is she alone who, despite all his faults, loves him to the end. She commands all our respect and sympathy. She has all the qualities which are sought after in an Indian woman of her class, but except a few years at the beginning of her married life, her lot is tragic. In this she is no exception. Many around her share the same fate, and Sarshār was keenly aware of this and deeply sorry for them. All his works show his deep sympathy for them, and there is no doubt that his collaborator Mādho Parshād expresses his feelings too when he writes at the end of the book:

السیں ذرا شک نہیں کہ جب قدر نظام
 منلو کہ عقیفہ عورتوں پر ہمارے
 ملک میں کیا جاتا ہے انقدر اور
 کسی شائستہ ملک میں عورتوں

پر نہیں کیا جاتا -

"There is not the least doubt that the ill-treatment to which chaste married women are subjected in our country is unparalleled in any other civilised country." 1

If the choṭi begam is the most sympathetic character in the book, her husband is the least. Sarshār's rather perfunctory attempt to explain beforehand that his courtiers were the cause of his degeneration very soon ceases to carry much weight, for we see how exceedingly easy it is to lead him astray. In fact, the one restraining influence in his life has been fear of his father, and when his father ceases to exercise constant authority over him, he finds himself unable to resist any temptation for long. Even in the first few pages of the book we are put off by his conceit, when we see him showing off his knowledge by correcting his semi-literate courtiers. His initial reluctance to go to the Jewish dancing-girls is due only to fear that this will become known and he will get a bad reputation.² And once his hesitation is overcome, he is quite at ease with them. The same ridiculous conceit is in evidence here too. He says of himself:

گھر تو یہ کرے اور کان پلٹر کر لیتا
ہوں کہ اب دفعہ اپنا نب کو بھی

1. p.482.

2. p.33.

دیکھیں تو نزار چان سے عاشق ہو جائیں

"With all humility I can say that if once they [the dancing-girls] see me they will fall madly in love with me." 1

After this incident he can no longer resist any woman who comes his way. He starts drinking too after the same minimum of persuasion, and after he has had a few drinks is thrilled with his new discovery.²

His cowardice is quite contemptible. In the episode of the stolen pony, when he finds that there is a warrant out against him, he cries like a child and even contemplates committing suicide.

He has no sense of loyalty or gratitude to anyone. His parents, his mistresses, the choṭi begam, Zāhūran, his friend Seth Gūjar Mal - all are treated alike. When the episode of the stolen pony has shown him how much he needs his father, and how the old man will accept him back without conditions, he is ready to return, but his mood is an unpleasant mixture of maudlin sentiment and calculating greed. Zāhūran comes to him and describes the distress which both his wife and his mother had felt at his banishment from home. She paints so moving a picture that he is "deeply moved".³

1. p.8.

2. p.45.

3. نواب صاحب عادل بھٹو p.300.

But his reply is:

سو ظہور ان چلنے کو تو ہم چلنے ہیں -
 اور آیا جان سے بھی وعدہ کر لیا ہے
 اور فرخندہ کو بھی دھنا بنا لی ہے مگر
 ایک شرط ہے کہ ہم دو گھروں کے بغیر
 نہیں رہیں گے - اب محل میں کھیرائے
 درگاہ محل میں چلے گئے - تم گھر بڑھاؤ

"As for coming back, I am ready. And I've given daddy my word, and got rid of Farkhunda too. But I'll come on one condition: I must have two houses, so that when I'm tired of one I can go to the other; and you must come and live with me." 1

He returns, but sees not the slightest need to modify the behaviour that had caused the breach. He drinks as heavily as ever, and in a drunken brawl seriously injures one of his courtiers.

Later, when after his wife has turned Zahūran out he traces her and marries her, he tells her, speaking of the choṭi begam:

"اسی ایسی تیبی کھٹھاری لوڑی
 بنا کر رکھوں تو پہی

"To hell with her! I'll make her your maid-servant before I've finished. Just see if I don't." 2

1. p.301.
 2. p.353.

The moment he sets eyes on Lily, the English mistress of his friend Seth Gūjar Mal, he wants her for himself. Now it is Z̄ahūran's turn, and he thinks to himself, "I'll get rid of Z̄ahūran too."¹ He succeeds in making Lily his mistress, and Z̄ahūran leaves him.

When his old father is on his death bed he does not even go to see him, and on his death a week later he feels only satisfaction, because now he will be completely free to do as he pleases.

His contemptible qualities continue in evidence right up to his death, when, having murdered Z̄ahūran in a drunken fit of rage, he cannot bear to face the consequences and commits suicide. As though to emphasise his repulsiveness, Sarshār depicts the recovery of his corpse, now almost unrecognisable as it floats on the water, while his death by his own act ensures his punishment beyond the grave.

Sarshār's declared aim in writing this tale was to warn his readers of the evils of drinking.² (In the columns of Avadh Akhbār the point was emphasised by heading every instalment with a verse - the same verse on each occasion - cursing wine.)

1. ظہوران کو بچی رضا بول دوت p.452.
2. pp.2-3 and 5.

If in the character of the young nawab we had seen the tragedy of a decent young man brought deeper and deeper into degradation by this vice, the impact of the intended moral would have been much greater. But Amīn ud dīn Ḥaidar is so repulsive a character in any case that we soon cease to care very much what happens to him, and the impact is correspondingly less. There are signs that Sarshār realised this, and that in order to counteract this defect he developed the character of Seth Gūjar Mal. As far as one can judge from the part which we possess, he seems to have played a much smaller part in the first version of the story.

Sarshār's portrayal of the seṭh jī is interesting in a number of ways. The seṭh is not an uncommon figure in his pages, but he generally shows him as a man who has none of the finer human feelings. His only concern is to make as much money as he can. He is timid and obsequious, but at the same time very cunning, so that he ^{never} loses any chance to fleece his clients. The portrayal is such as to arouse dislike and contempt. Sarshār makes fun of his way of life, his manners, his semi-literacy, his language and his lack of capacity for enjoying life. But the seṭh of Jām i Sarshār is quite a different character, and Sarshār introduces him in words which make this clear at the outset. He is described as an exceptionally handsome young man, and the owner of a great deal of landed property. Though, like most of his class, he

has received little or no formal education, he has consorted with the aristocracy ever since he was a boy and speaks Urdu so well that none would imagine that he had never learned Persian [that hallmark of the Lucknow nobleman]. He had all the aristocrat's sense of dignity, and never allowed any man to humiliate him; yet he was at the same time an approachable, courteous and modest man. He was extremely charitable to the poor and needy, and treated his tenants with every consideration, helping them with loans at the low interest of four annas to the hundred rupees or even by outright grants of cash in times of need. And he did all this without advertising the fact. He was a great patron of education and learning; he provided scholarships for students of Sanskrit, built a school at his own expense, and provided annual prizes in cash and valuable books for all the colleges and schools in his district. His two great weaknesses were wine and women.¹ The impression which this first description makes is maintained throughout by the seṭh jī's words and actions. This is much higher praise from his creator than the young nawab had received. Seṭh jī has none of those characteristics for which the men of his class are hated. His faults are the faults of the aristocracy in whose company his character has been formed, and his good qualities too are the qualities of the aristocracy. In short, Gūjar Mal is not a representative of

1. p.18.

the rich money-lenders, and has nothing in common with them except his name, which is one commonly found in his community.

As though to make the point clear Sarshār introduces an incident in the first chapter of the book in which a seth of the traditional kind is shown. He greets a nawāb who is passing by. The nawāb replies to his greeting in high-flown Urdu, and the man, who cannot understand such Urdu but does not like to show it, laughs amiably in reply, not realising that he is being ridiculed.¹

ایک مشہور اور نامی گرامی جوہری
 کمال لڑکا اشد عربی پر سوار گاڑی
 سے پاس کھڑا ہے ۔ ۔ ۔ ۔ نواب
 صاحب سے صاحب سلامت ہوئی تو
 دو دنوں مسکرائے جوہری نے پوچھا
 مجبور یہاں کیاں بھول پڑے انھوں
 نے جواب ترقی بتائی دیا۔ جہاں آپ
 وہاں بندہ بھونک واحد ہے۔ وہ
 پڑھا لکھا تو تھا نہیں۔ مسکرا کر اٹلر
 ایسی بک ہاں بھونک تو ہے

Unlike most money-lenders, he is not a miser, but likes to live well. He knows his weaknesses and does not seek to blame others for them.

He shows a praiseworthy regard for his friends. Thus

1. p.25.

when the nawāb is turned out by his father and moves to Nuṣrat ud daula's house, he goes to visit him every evening so that the nawāb should not feel that he was deserted. His attitude towards women is very different from the nawāb's. We are not told whether he is married, but he is never unfaithful to the women who come into his life; rather it is the women who deceive him. The Jewish girls make a fool of him and in a single night get thousands of rupees out of him. Yet in the morning when he comes to his senses and realises what has happened, though he regrets the loss of so much money, he is not angry with the girls who had tricked him; and later when they are in trouble he comes to their assistance. When they finally go off to another city he is very sorry to lose them.

When Lily enters his life, it is clear to the reader from the start that her only concern is to get money out of him, but he is as generous as she is greedy and in a short time she becomes a very wealthy woman. After she leaves him for the nawāb his story is not traced in any detail, but we are told that drinking had wrecked his health and that despite the best medical treatment his life could not be saved. This story of a young man who had good qualities in plenty but was ruined by drinking is a much more effective moral tale than that of the nawāb. And we cannot help remembering as we read it that Sarshār's own real-life story

was very similar to that of the seṭh. One feels that already when he wrote Jām i Sarshār he was aware of his weakness and feared a similar outcome.

Nuṣrat ud daula is another character who is more favourably portrayed than the nawab, though he too has all the faults of the decadent young aristocrats of Lucknow. His best quality - perhaps his only really good quality - is his regard for his friends. He is a simpleton who can be fooled by anyone, a man quite incapable of managing his own affairs, and one whose nature demands new excitements all the time. He too is ruined by the time the story ends, but not by drink (though he is a heavy drinker). In his case, it is ignorant superstition that brings about his downfall. One feels sorry for him because he is such a fool, and it is pity rather than disgust that he inspires, and Sarshār's own tone in speaking of him reflects this feeling.¹

Thus in these three characters Sarshār portrays the effects of the evils of debauchery, drink, and superstition - the same evils that he constantly attacked in Fasāna i Azād.

One of the most interesting and best portrayed characters in the book is that of Zahūran. Like all of Sarshār's major characters, she is intended to represent some feature typical of the society in his day. She is the

1. p.46.

type of the young and handsome servant-girl who so often in the old aristocratic families attracted the attentions of the young nawābs and took full advantage of this to improve their own lot in life. Very frequently they became the young men's concubines, or even co-wives, and Sarshār sees in their calculating wiles another cause of the corruption and ruin of the men of noble birth who should have been the natural leaders of society. Sarshār's attitude throughout his works is uniformly hostile to these women. It contrasts noticeably with his attitude to the dancing-girls and the courtesans who figure so often in his stories. These are not the target of any strong attack - perhaps because he felt the evil of their company too obvious to need stressing, perhaps because (in practice) he regarded them as a normal feature of the social scene. The relations between Zahūran and the nawāb run true to form. He feels attracted to her and starts to woo her. She is not averse to his attentions and uses all her coquetry to strengthen her hold over him, at the same time enjoying the experience of love which the affair brings her. Like him, she treats the accepted code of honour with scant respect, deceiving the choṭī begam with as little scruple as he does; though the choṭī begam treats her more like an intimate friend than a mere maid-servant, she feels no compunction in betraying her. Equally, she has no deep feelings for the nawāb. Although she enjoys his attentions, her main concern

is to control him and exploit him to the full. Yet she is not without self-respect and independence of spirit. When the choṭī begam turns her out she makes no attempt to keep up her affair with the nawāb; it is he who has to seek her out. When she suspects the nawāb's liaison with Lily, she tells him bluntly:

تم پہلو چھوڑ دو گے تو ہم بھی تختے تین
سوسا کٹھ کو چھوڑ دیں گے

"If you desert me I'll desert you - and hundreds more like you." 1

And when he does make Lily his mistress she unhesitatingly rejects the luxury in which he has been keeping her in order to take her revenge. Not for her is the loyal subservience to her lord and master which the choṭī begam's code prescribes, regardless of her lord and master's behaviour towards her. She tells him:

ڈر ہو گا ٹھہری جو ردا کو - ہم سے
نہیں رہا جائیگا کہ بیماری چھائی پر
کوئی کو دون دے اور ہم ٹکٹک
دیدم دم نکتیدم - میں کسی ابد
رہیں گی ٹھہری تو ہوں نہیں کچھ
ڈر سکا ہے کاپڑا ہے - درزن ہی ٹھہری
- نا

"I'm not your [first] wife, to be afraid of you. I won't put up with it. I won't have you walk all over me and not raise a cheep. I'm no nobleman's daughter. What have I to fear? I'm only a sempstress's daughter, aren't I?" 1

Sarshār means us to be shocked by these words, seeing in them a proof of ^{the} contemptible absence of high standards of conduct which characterised women of her class who have no high reputation to maintain. But a modern reader will draw rather different conclusions, preferring her spirit to that of women who value their good name above their rights.

Zahūran, in short, hits back, and hits where it hurts him most, at his pride. The letter which he leaves behind him reveals that when she walks out of his house and becomes a common prostitute, what he cannot swallow is the fact that she has been not just his concubine, but his wife; and though she herself is killed, her own death ensures an even more disgraceful end for him.

She is so realistically drawn that she transcends the limitations of Sarshār's own view of her, and the modern reader sees her in a somewhat different light from that in which he sought to show her. He, and the general opinion of his day disapproved the conduct of the nawabs towards these women, but it was the women who were indignantly condemned. Our attitude tends to be the reverse of this. We do not

1. p.476.

forget that it is the nawāb who takes the initiative, that he is every bit as guilty of dishonourable conduct as she, and above all that he has absolutely no motive for behaving as he does other than the irresponsible satisfaction of his lust. Her position is quite different. She is a young girl who has reached womanhood, but she lives in the suffocating atmosphere of the zanāna where there is no outlet for the emotions natural to a healthy young girl. Apart from entertaining the begam her only diversion is the visits of her friends. She sees the begam's relations with her husband, and everything around her stimulates her appetites. In these conditions nothing could be more natural than that she should respond to the nawāb's flirting. He is an attractive man, and he has the power to fulfil all her dreams of romance. Her behaviour^r offends against the code that should govern the relations between master and servant, but where else does she see the traditional codes observed? She is not a newcomer to the mahalsarā. Her mother,¹ and probably her mother's mother, had been humble needlewomen in the service of rich begams, and she had seen the darkness and poverty of their lives. And now in the dark passages of the big house the young, handsome nawāb is always waiting to waylay her; and in the warm nights when she is half asleep he wakes her with his kisses.² But it is a long time before

1. p.476.

2. p.142.

she yields to his demands, and it would be unfair to her to attribute this solely to her desire to strengthen her hold on him, although this factor no doubt enters into it - and with every justification. Her subsequent behaviour has already been described.

In short, Sarshār aimed, through Zahūran, to show how contemptible were the low-class women who led young aristocrats astray. But his realism portrays her so faithfully that we have in his picture the basis for a different conclusion, and we see her as one who even though she sins, is still more sinned against, one who does indeed contribute something to the destruction of the old order, but who even more is destroyed by it and by the class of men of whom Amīn ud dīn Haidar is the type.

There are interesting points raised by a study of some of the minor characters. There is the old manservant Nūrā, a sort of pale reflection of Fasāna i Azād's Khojī. (It is noticeable that Sarshār is haunted by Khojī and seeks to re-create him again and again in subsequent works.) There are the courtiers, shown for the most part in their usual roles of flattering, exploiting and cheating the noble lords, but here occasionally shown also in contexts where they can reveal their real selves freely. The result is a modification of the black picture of them which Sarshār usually paints in his desire to show them, and not the nawabs themselves,

as the cause of the decay of the old order. They are still shown as men who live by their wits, but we see also a glimpse of the problems which drive them to act as they do. Thus when the two musahibs who have been sent to consult the lawyer about the accident in which the potter is injured are returning home, they discuss what to do in view of the lawyer's advice that the incident is not serious. They decide that they will represent it as a serious matter, and divide between themselves the "legal fees" they get out of the nawab. One says he needs the money to lay in enough grain to see him through the rainy season, while the other proposes to spend it on redeeming the mortgage on his house. Similarly when Nusrat ud daula sends his two courtiers, the maulvi sahib and Jagat Singh on their journey to the country of the magicians, they are shown conversing as they wait for the train. The maulvi sahib expresses his contempt for supposedly cultured people who believe such nonsense, especially when Islam itself gives no sanction for such beliefs.¹ Jagat Singh quite agrees, but adds that he is a business man's son, whose aim in life is to make money. He was ruined when a scoundrelly uncle squandered all his father's savings. "Such education as I got brings a man no distinction. My standing depends on my making money. You see my point?"²

1. p.395.

2. p.397.

An interesting figure, who appears only briefly in the story, is Bashīr ud dīn, a friend of Nuṣrat ud daula. Sarshār describes him as a man of the middle class, whose means are modest and who lives a respectable, sober life quite different both from that of the nawābs and that of the courtiers. He is very favourably portrayed. He tries to warn Nuṣrat ud daula against the unscrupulous English astrologer, and when Nuṣrat is desperate for money, Bashīr ud dīn, despite his limited means, proves willing to help him when rich moneylenders will no longer look at him.¹ One feels that Sarshār, who was himself in a somewhat similar position to that of Bashīr ud dīn, is at some pains to stress the social worth of the class to which he belongs.

The fact that Jām i Sarshār was written at the same time as part of Fasāna i Azād naturally suggests a comparison between the two works. In general, it would be true to say that Jām i Sarshār represents a further step away from the dāstān and towards the modern novel. All the virtues of Fasāna i Azād are there - the command of language, the brilliant use of dialogue, and the drawing of character largely by this means. But in addition Jām i Sarshār has other qualities which Fasāna i Azād lacks. The setting is entirely realistic, the element of dāstān-like fantasy almost

1. p.449.

completely absent, and the language in general markedly more natural. The old delight in displaying the ability to write the high-flown fasāna prose-style is very much less in evidence, and the vigour of the natural colloquial takes its place. This is true even of the descriptive pieces, which in Fasāna i Azād was nearly always done in true dāstān style. The dialogue too reflects this. Sarshār's characters too have, so to speak, grown up with him, and delight less in displaying their eloquence than in conveying clearly what they have to say. The humour shows less of the broad, farcical, slap-stick element, and where in Fasāna i Azād it is very often supplied by characters consciously trying to be funny, in Jām i Sarshār it is often a humour implicit in a situation in which these elements are also blended. (The best example is the court scene where the case of the injury to the potter is tried: the words and actions both of the judge and of the nawab's coachman send us into fits of laughter - but we laugh all the more because the humour which they provide is quite unintentional.) The characterisation is very much better than in Fasāna i Azād. There the one really masterly achievement is the character of Khojī, but it stands out so clearly precisely because it is so exceptional. Many of the minor characters in Fasāna i Azād are well-drawn, but Khojī is the only really major one with whom Sarshār achieves real success. In Jām i Sarshār the position is reversed, and there

is only one major character - that of the young nawab - who does not really appear in the round. Moreover, with this same exception, none of the characters is now merely a peg on which to hang an idea, and nothing more. (Zahūran in particular most strikingly illustrates this point.) The plot construction too marks an advance. The plot of Fasāna i Azād barely deserves the name; that of Jām i Sarshār has a fairly high degree of coherence. However, this is still Sarshār's weakest point. The three stories of the young nawab, the seṭh jī and Nuṣrat are indeed connected, but there is not the close inter-action between them which really well-knit construction demands.

A more striking contrast is presented by the different attitudes which we find in the two books. In Fasāna i Azād the old order, represented by stupid nawabs, scheming and flattering courtiers and effeminate fops, is counterposed to the new light, represented by Azād, the enlightened Bengalis, and above all by the British, the admired exponents of the new way of life. In Jām i Sarshār, written though it was while Fāsana i Azād was still in progress, the contrast is almost entirely in terms of the old society, with the positive values of that society being strongly counterposed to its decadent elements, and the English being represented throughout (with a few minor exceptions) by contemptible characters whose role is in effect to join the hangers-on of

the nawabs in exploiting them and hastening their downfall. Not that Sarshār does not still stand by the new light. It is rather that he sees its future victory as coming from the efforts of the Indians who have embraced it, and from combining with it all the best traditions of the old order. There is no longer any suggestion that the example of the British in India shows the way to salvation. To some extent Jām i Sarshār represents a measure of disillusionment, both in the capacity of the young nawābs to reform themselves and their society, and in that of the British to contribute anything to this process. Sarshār maintains, rather perfunctorily, the stand that the nawābs themselves are alright, and that it is their courtiers and their scheming servant-girls that cause all the trouble, but we feel that he hardly convinces himself, let alone his readers. As for the English, the bare outline of the plot makes their role so clear as to need no further elaboration. Instead of fighting superstition, they exploit it for their own ends, and it is noteworthy that where the maulvi sahib and Jagat Singh rob their nawāb of seven thousand rupees, the English astrologer robs him of everything he has, and he is never heard of again. It is not only the major English characters who are so unfavourably portrayed. Minor characters too receive the same treatment. In the early pages of the book, where the young nawāb, accompanied by some of his courtiers,

is going to see the Jewish dancing-girls, their carriage passes that of an English captain and his wife. The nawab's party is in high spirits and they are talking and laughing. The captain is very much put out by this and starts talking to his wife about these "niggers" and "black men" who have no culture and do not know how to behave. Their conversation is reported at length. They resent the fact that the nawāb's horses are better than theirs. Such savages, says the wife, are not fit to own such fine things, and they should be taken from them. A lot more follows in this vein, and the two carriages come alongside each other. The captain, now very angry, tells the nawāb's coachman to stop, calls him a "bloody pig" when he does not understand, and puts him into such a state of agitation that he inadvertently whips up the horses, which gallop away, leaving the captain's carriage behind. He tries in vain to overtake it, and in the end vents his wrath by whipping an innocent ekka-driver.¹ Sarshār hastens to balance the picture by showing how another Englishman, a college professor, who had witnessed this incident, expresses his regret at it, comments that it is people like the captain "who give us all a bad name", and appeases the ekka-driver by giving him some money; but it is the first incident that creates the most lasting impression.

1. pp.22-3.

Among the minor characters the only Englishman portrayed with any degree of sympathy at all is the good-natured judge before whom the nawab's coachman is summoned to appear in connection with the injury to the potter; and he is shown as having so poor a command of Urdu that with the best will in the world he is not competent to handle the case. In this scene Sarshār is treating one of his favourite themes - the British legal system which in his view (and not only his) was so absolutely unsuitable to Indian conditions. He paints the picture in detail¹ - mainly through his chosen medium of dialogue - and the result is hilarious. Had not Fasāna i Azād so much overshadowed his other writings, this scene would surely have been recognised as one of the most brilliant pieces of humorous writing in Urdu literature.

The same consideration applies in large measure to the book as a whole. The advance towards maturity which it marks in Sarshār's development both as a thinker and as a realistic writer is very striking. The crude, naive counter-posing of the new light to the old has gone; on the one hand there is now a conscious realisation of the excellence of many of the old values and of their relevance to contemporary life; on the other, a more accurate recognition of current realities, bringing an awareness that the British in India do not all play the sterling role which he once thought they

1. The episode occupies 10 pages, 68 ff.

did and that Indians must look mainly to themselves for their own salvation. With this greater realism of thought goes a greater realism and higher level of achievement in literary method - more vigorous, natural language, crisper dialogue, the virtual abandonment of unreal fantasy, more uniform success in the creation of complex, three-dimensional characters, increased subtlety of humour, and a closer approach (though one cannot say more than that) to the construction of a well-knit plot. This amounts to saying that the old dāstān tradition has been sloughed off, and that the elements of the modern novel are now free to develop fully. It is to be hoped that when Sarshār's work comes to be studied more widely with the degree of attention that it deserves, Jām i Sarshār will at last be recognised as a major contribution to the development of the modern Urdu novel.

CHAPTER VIISAIR I KOHSAR

Jām i Sarshār was published in 1887. Sair i Kohsār followed, probably in 1890.¹ It is a much longer work, comprising two volumes with a total of nearly 2,000 pages.

It tells the story of 'Askarī, a young Lucknow nawab. In bare outline, the story is as follows. One day he asks his courtiers why it is that during the hot season so many British officials go to the hills. They tell him that even during the summer the climate there is pleasantly cool, and that this is good for the health. He thereupon decides that he too will go, and chooses Naini Tal, which is the nearest of the hill stations. Before leaving he gives a party to which he invites his Indian friends and a number of English officials. He has arranged to rent a bungalow in Naini Tal and he now invites an English official named Frazer to stay with him there. But just as he is ready to start his sister-in-law insists that he should delay his departure and stay for the ceremony which marks the occasion of her son's shaving for the first time. He feels obliged to agree, but he fails to inform the English official who was to share the bungalow with him, and as a result he reaches the station to

1. This is the date of the copy in the British Museum. I have not been able to find any other evidence of the date.

find that the nawāb is not there, and has to go on to Naini Tal on his own. When he gets there he experiences great difficulty in finding accommodation, and his experience leads him to adopt a violently anti-Indian attitude.

Meanwhile the nawāb goes to his sister-in-law's to attend the ceremony. There he sees a very beautiful young bangle-seller, ^{named Qamran,} and at once falls in love with her. After the ceremony he follows her with a companion, and she at length turns round and speaks to him. She is a married woman, but she makes it clear from the start that she is ready to come to him and promises to make all the necessary arrangements. She then goes off to her grandmother's house, where she is staying with her sister Nāzū. They are both as immoral as she is, and there is no difficulty about accommodating the nawāb. Qamran becomes his mistress and is installed in a house where he visits her secretly. One day Qamran's husband Qādir comes to her grandmother's house to take her back home. Her grandmother and Nāzū tell him that she has already left for home, and when Qādir says that she never got there, tell him that she must have run away with a pan-seller named Lalitwā. Qādir goes to seek out Lalitwā, and finds that he has gone to Cawnpore with some woman. Convinced that the woman is Qamran, he takes some friends with him and goes at once to Cawnpore, where with the help of the police he finds Lalitwā and discovers that the woman is not Qamran at all.

Meanwhile the nawāb's wife, who is away in Calcutta, gets a letter informing her about the nawāb's affair with Qamran. A relative named Bashīr ud daula promises to help her to get rid of Qamran, and both come to Lucknow. The begam confides in her sister 'Iffat Jahān, who sends for Nāzū and questions her about the nawāb's relations with Qamran. She tells her that she does not wholly disapprove of the affair, because the begam is childless, and if the nawāb marries another wife to obtain an heir, it is better that he should marry Qamran than take some unknown woman to wife. The begam too would benefit by this arrangement. If therefore Nāzū can bring Qamran to them, she personally will undertake to arrange her marriage to the nawāb. Nāzū believes her, and next day Qamran and Nāzū set out in two litters for 'Iffat Jahān's house. But the litter-bearers take Qamran to her husband's house and Nāzū to 'Iffat Jahān's. When Nāzū finds that Qamran is not with her she rushes to the house where the nawāb had installed her, only to find the begam and Bashīr ud daula there. She realises now that she has been tricked.

Qamran now asks her husband to send for one Mahārāj Balī. This is an old man, a friend of the nawāb and Nāzū's lover. Qādir does not know this, but he is a very simple man, and is in any case so devoted to Qamran that he will do anything she asks. Mahārāj Balī comes, and with his help she

escapes from Qādir's house; but before she can get to the nawāb, Bashīr ud daula's men waylay her, and she is carried off and held captive.¹

When the nawāb goes to the house where he had kept Qamran he finds his wife there and realises what must have happened. All his efforts to find her are unsuccessful.

Bashīr ud daula now pesters the begam, demanding that as a reward for getting rid of Qamran she should give him her love; she has given him some encouragement so long as she was dependent upon his help, but now she tries to evade him, and when he attempts to embrace her, she seizes a knife and wounds him in the thigh, and so gets rid of him.

The nawab's courtiers now introduce him to a majzūba² who promises to find Qamran. She and the courtiers for a long time extract a lot of money from him on the pretext of searching for her, but in the end they do manage to find her and restore her to him. He now goes off to Naini Tal, taking her with him, along with Nāzū, Mahārāj Balī and others.

The nawāb benefits a great deal from his stay in Naini Tal. For the first time he comes in contact with people of modern ideas, and under their influence his own habits and ideas change considerably. One day he gets a letter from

1. Sarshār never explains how this is done or where Qamran is kept.

2. A woman ascetic.

his brother-in-law in Lucknow in which he warns him that Qamran's husband Qādir has filed a suit against him and that the police are coming to search his house. He seeks the help of a barrister with whom he has made friends. He takes Qamran and Nāzū back to Lucknow, and the nawāb follows them later. He finds out that it is Bashīr ud daula who is behind Qādir. Bashīr ud daula is now discovered to have been a very shady character; he is a man with a great weakness for low-class women, and in order to get them has committed several crimes. The police are on his track, and Qādir's association with him give them a lever against him. They use this in the nawāb's interest and Qādir is compelled to divorce Qamran. A case is brought against Bashīr ud daula and he is sent to prison. The nawāb now marries Qamran, and she begins to live in strict purdah. She feels very lonely and dissatisfied with this kind of life, and one day runs away with a young ice-cream seller. All efforts to find her are in vain. A long time afterwards a litter is one day brought to the nawāb's house, and Qamran is found lying inside, very ill. The nawāb treats her with every kindness, but she is past recovery. Before she dies she confesses to him that she had run away with an ice-cream seller, but that afterwards he had treated her very badly. She asks the nawāb to forgive her. He does so and she dies in his arms.

When we reduce the story to its bare outline in this way we are at once struck by two things. The first is that the story as such has no very obvious moral; and the second is that Sarshār seems for the first time to have constructed a reasonably strong, coherent plot. Neither of these conclusions would in fact be fully warranted. If the story has no very clear moral, the book as a whole certainly has; however, it will be convenient to postpone discussion of this point until later.

As for the plot, it is true that in some important respects it represents a further advance over Jām i Sarshār. We have already remarked that the three stories of Jām i Sarshār are not really integrated into a single whole. In Sair i Kohsār, by contrast, there is essentially only one story, and Sarshār keeps a firm grip on it throughout. He seems to have thought out the main lines beforehand and to have taken reasonable care to stick fairly closely to his plan. Moreover, he comes to the real starting point of his plot with the minimum of delay. Nawab 'Askari's attraction to Qamran is introduced on page 113 of the first volume, which, considering the great length of the book, is quite early in the unfolding of the narrative; and the development of the whole story unfolds from this beginning. This is another respect in which Sair i Kohsār is superior to Jām i Sarshār; the story really does develop, and the incidents follow one another not merely in time, but as stages in a connected

process in a far more real sense than was the case with Jām i Sarshār. The characterisation is also better. 'Askarī is an altogether more complex figure than Amīn ud dīn Ḥaidar, a man in whom good and bad qualities are mixed in the way they are in real life. Sarshār evidently planned to make him a sympathetic character, and he succeeds in maintaining him as such even though his weakness for low-class women, which in general is not approved, is the major continuing theme of the book. His good qualities are not just stated, but convincingly portrayed. He is a generous man, courteous, kind, and considerate not only to his friends but also to others

towards whom he might, with some justification, have behaved very differently. Thus when he meets his wife and Bashīr ud daula after they have succeeded in depriving him of Qamran, he speaks courteously and considerately to them both, although he is well aware of what they have done.¹ There would have been nothing improper in his actions if he had rebuked his wife for bringing in Bashīr ud daula to help her, and forbidden him to interfere in future. But he never dreams of doing so. (Even after the full extent of Bashīr ud daula's wickedness has been exposed he does not change his generous attitude towards him. When he hears of the hardships which he is suffering in imprisonment he resolves to do what he can to be of some help to him.²) He fully recognises his

1. Vol.I, p.359.

2. Vol.II, p.622.

traditional obligations to his wife, and is gentle in his behaviour towards her. He promises to visit her regularly in the zanāna, take his meals with her occasionally, and so on; he at once gives his promise, and shows himself so submissive that she laughingly tells him not to behave like a little boy being ordered about by his teacher.¹ And this too he does not resent. He is ready to see his own faults, and to acknowledge them to his wife. He tells her how fortunate he is to have so good and beautiful a wife and how wrong it is of him to neglect her as he does.² And finally his readiness to change himself is not confined to these close personal relationships. Once brought into contact with modern ways by his visit to Naini Tal, he is quick to recognise their superiority to old ways, and to change accordingly. Yet all this time his pre-occupation with Qamran continues. Like most of his class, he evidently sees nothing wrong in trying to appropriate a woman of low class, even though she has a husband who is devoted to her. The idea that the husband has any rights - even legal rights - in the matter is one that does not occur to him; and the rather dubious means he uses to get Qādir to divorce her are evidently excused in his mind by the importance of the purpose they are employed to serve.

The nawab's wife is also portrayed with some measure

1. Vol.II, p.505.

2. Vol.I, p.436.

of complexity, although it is always Sarshār's strong inclination to depict the begams as angels of goodness and beauty. So she too is both beautiful and virtuous, and motivated in her relations with her husband by love as well as by duty. But there are complexities in her character which do not appear in the choṭi begam of Jām i Sarshār. One forms the impression that she is an older woman, and has been married to 'Askarī for some years without bearing him a child. This puts her in a more vulnerable position and leaves her with less resources to hold her husband's exclusive love and prevent his attention turning elsewhere. The measures to which this impels her are convincingly shown. (For example, the great care which she takes with her toilet, so as to appear at her most attractive, is described in detail¹.) She knows that her struggle to keep him will demand both persistence and resource, and she shows both. She gladly accepts Bashīr ud daula's proffered help. She knows that he needs sufficient encouragement to hold him to her purpose, and she flirts with him to the degree she considers necessary, without however committing herself. Though there is no suggestion that she herself ^{does not} enjoys the experience - and in this respect Sarshār somewhat mars his picture of her as the embodiment of the chaste ideal - she can take care of herself, and when his advances go too far she can take drastic measures to repulse him.

1. Vol.I, p.387.

Of the major characters, - Bashīr ud daula and Qamran - are wholly negative. But they too are not, in general, unconvincingly portrayed. In Bashīr ud daula's portrayal there are inconsistencies arising from considerations which will be discussed later. In Qamran's the only false note is her speech, which would have been appropriate enough on the lips of a courtesan, but seems much less so on those of an uneducated bangle-seller - even a Lucknow bangle-seller.¹ Despite the absence of any redeeming features, she carries conviction as a calculating woman who knows that her beauty is her one asset in life and is resolved to exploit it to the full. Her end is convincing too. To live as the nawab's mistress was one thing; to live as his wife in the wholly unaccustomed restrictions of full purdah, quite another; and her rash and short-sighted bid to free herself reflects a wholly credible desperation. Sarshār, as we have seen, had a strong aristocratic bias, and his contempt and disapproval of women of Qamran's class who attempted to exploit the attraction they held for the aristocracy was as unbending as it was for women like Zahūran. Whether he consciously felt that the point which he had created Qamran to make would go home more effectively if he showed others of her class as less wholly bad, we have no means of knowing. But he does in fact achieve this effect by showing Qamran's sister Nāzū in a rather less unfavourable light. In spite of her cheapness

1. Vol.I, p.165.

she shows a good deal of understanding and restraint. Before she has any chance to make her own choice, she finds herself attached to the ugly old miser Mahārāj Balī. Her sister is already the nawāb's mistress, and he now wants her to be his mistress too. She is under no obligation to stick to Mahārāj Balī and has every reason to feel tempted to forsake him for the nawāb, but she does not, and in the end we find her living in purdah as though she were Mahārāj Balī's wife. With Qamran's husband Qādir Sarshār goes even further, allowing him to emerge as a rather lovable figure, whose simple, unpretentious love for his beautiful wife is so strong that not even her open unfaithfulness to him can diminish it.

Along with the improved plot and more complex drawing of character, Sarshār's old talents are still fully in evidence. His command of language is as great as ever, as is also his brilliant use of dialogue. There is an account of a quarrel between Qādir and Qamran, in which his mother and a neighbour also interfere, done almost entirely in dialogue, without description or 'stage directions' of any kind; and yet the whole scene rises vividly before our eyes.¹ But the book shows not only his old power, but an extension of it. In it he deals in some detail, for the first time, with characters from the lower classes of society, and he is in

1. Vol. I, p. 355. However, it is also noteworthy that in Sair i Kohsār there is more directly descriptive writing than in previous works. This is generally well done, in simple, effective language.

general very careful to make them speak the authentic language of their real-life models, and is conspicuously successful in doing so. Lalitwā, Qādir, his mother, and his friends and neighbours are shown thinking, behaving and talking exactly as such people do in real life. Balī's Hindu man-servant talks in typical Avadhī.¹ The Hindu women characters (Maharāj Balī's wife, for instance) speak in their own characteristic way, sometimes using Avadhī, and sometimes simple standard Urdu-Hindi, just as they do today. In contrast, but with equal authenticity, the Muslim sempstress to whom 'Askarī allots the task of keeping an eye on Qamran, speaks not only in chaste Urdu but with the zil'a jugat² for which Urdu-speakers in Lucknow had such a fondness.³ And a whole host of minor characters is drawn, each of whom has his or her distinctive speech - the ascetic majzuba,⁴ the old jam'adār in charge of a small police station,⁵ the Bengali babu⁶ and many others. In short, the dialogue of practically all the minor characters is authentic, and this accords with the talent Sarshār had always shown in depicting such characters; but in Sair i Kohsār he demonstrates this ability over a wider range of characters than his earlier works had portrayed.

1. Vol.I, p.171.

2. A sort of sustained punning and play upon words.

3. Vol.I, pp.227-8.

4. Vol.I, p.410.

5. Vol.II, pp.179-80.

6. Vol.II, p.478.

Despite the advances in technique which Sair i Kohsār shows, there are still evident weaknesses. Thus not all the characters are wholly convincing. Bashīr ud daula is very inconsistently drawn, and we are struck by the differences between the portrayal of him in the first half of the book, before his attempted outrage on the begam, and after it; and here one feels that Sarshār's conscious ideals are involved. In portraying his ideal of womanhood - the young begam, beautiful, romantic, dignified, and above all unshakeably true to her husband - his own emotions become deeply involved, and an affront to her so heinous as that which Bashīr ud daula offers seems to him a sin of a kind for which no punishment is too great. This is perhaps why in the second part of the book, after this incident has taken place, he is painted in the blackest of colours. But in his desire to blacken him Sarshār both forgets what he has said about him in the first part of the book and introduces developments which go beyond the limit of credibility. Thus in the earlier part of the book he is represented as a man who comes of a Lucknow family but lives in Calcutta: in the second part he is discovered as having a long record of crimes committed in Lucknow.¹ Moreover his crimes have, it seems, been so numerous and of such a scandalous kind that it passes all belief that in spite of this he could conceal them all and

1. Vol.II, p.531.

preserve his good name intact for so long. In planning the moves to separate the nawab from Qamran he has been shown as a sharp and extremely resourceful man. Yet in the second half of the book this resourcefulness evaporates, and characters who had been shown as his henchmen turn against him for no explained reason, and he is caught and condemned. His punishment too is rather what Sarshār felt appropriate for one who tried to molest a begam than one which we can readily believe would have been awarded to a man of the aristocracy in the conditions of those days, and he is shown performing hard labour, working along with common criminals at building roads.

Mahārāj Balī also fails to come to life, and we perhaps feel Sarshār's failure the more because we see in him a really very feeble attempt to create another Khojī. His main interest for us lies in the fact that he typifies that class of Hindu aristocrats whose culture and life outside the house is barely distinguishable from that of the Muslims, but whose home life is purely Hindu. Scenes which are laid in his home are not infrequent and sometimes occupy fifteen to twenty pages at a stretch; and these are very well done.

With Qamran, Nāzū and her grandmother there is a failure of a different kind. Reference has already been made to the false note which is struck by Qamran's speech, which is that appropriate to a courtesan rather than that of a

bangle-seller. The same is true of Nāzū and of the grandmother, and the result is that though the characters are convincing as characters, they are not fully plausible as lower-class characters.

The portrayal of Bashīr ud daula and of Qamran and her family offer two interesting illustrations of the way in which Sarshār's pre-occupation with women comes in the way of his talents as a writer of narrative. There is not a young woman in the whole of his writing who is not beautiful as well as young, and whose beauty is not lovingly described and dwelt upon. He seems to have been a man exceptionally susceptible to women's charms (like his first hero, Āzād) and wherever he introduces a young woman into his stories he cannot resist the temptation to give his imagination its head, and to describe in detail how she fascinates her husband or her lover as the case may be. His picture is, clearly, drawn partly from the courtesan and partly from the imaginary women of his ideal, who unites two elements much less frequently found together in his society - on the one hand, the attractiveness and the boldness in love of the courtesan, and in the other, the chastity and unbreakable loyalty of the begam. Sarshār's own enjoyment of such themes leads him to write of them at quite disproportionate length, and even to introduce them where their relevance is at the best minimal. Qamran is a most striking case in point. The opening of Sair i Kohsār makes it clear that Sarshār intended

to write a story about a young nawab who has many of the traditional weaknesses of his class and is at first shown as leading the life which is typical of it, but who has the potentialities which enable him to react as he should once he is brought into contact with the new light - in this case through his stay in Naini Tal. Qamran comes in as an illustration of the defects of the old way of life, but having once come in, she holds up for practically a whole volume the introduction of the visit to the hills which was to be decisive in 'Askarī's experience of life and central to the theme of the book. The handling of Bashīr ud daula illustrates the same general point - that where Sarshār's pre-occupation with women impinges upon developments it is often to the detriment of his art as a narrator. The faults in the portrayal of Bashīr ud daula were seen to be directly connected with his offence against a young and beautiful begam - and so against Sarshār's own ideals. The same character shows also that when it comes to the point, Sarshār feels a certain relish in the description of love-making in its own right. His exposure as a debauchee is carried through with a quite unnecessary abundance of unsavoury detail. He keeps simultaneously many mistresses taken from women of low caste. (One of them is a sweeper woman.) His henchmen bring him married women who are then locked in his house and forced to become his mistresses. He pays money to his servants to

marry young, good-looking girls and after some time to hand them over to him. Sarshār describes all this in such detail that a suspicion arises in the mind of the reader that as so often, indignant condemnation of sexual offences goes hand in hand with surreptitious pleasure in describing them, and the story is again and again help^d up for such episodes to be related.¹

Another fault in Sair i Kohsār is, ironically, connected with one of its main virtues, that is, with the fact that there is a strong plot which develops according to its own logic and is not tampered with in order to produce some strong didactic moral. But Sarshār was as concerned in this book as in any other to preach such a moral, and the result is that he has to thrust it in in a way which, it is true, does not impair the logic of the story, but which does hold up its natural development while we are obliged to take our medicine. The Nāini Tal episodes which occupy, roughly speaking, the first half of volume two, are padded out by long passages of preaching, and though these are very interesting to the student of the development of Sarshār's ideas, they are undoubtedly a serious artistic fault.

1. ~~Vol. I,~~ Some contemporary critics of Sarshār objected to his books on the ground that they were not fit for chaste women to read. Presumably it was in passages such as these that they found their strongest arguments.

Sarshār's didactic aims in writing Sair i Kohsār were evidently two. The first was to reinforce further his teaching on the status of women. In Fasāna i Āzād he had tried, through his extraordinary heroine Ḥusn Arā, to portray the wife of his ideal. In Jām i Sarshār he had tried to show through Zahūran, the menace to the realisation of his ideals which the attractive and unscrupulous servant girls of noble houses represented. In Sair i Kohsār he repeats the same lesson with the variant that here the villain of the piece is not the servant girl living in the house, but the loose-living, low-class woman outside it. There is the same pity and indignation aroused by the injustice done to the chaste and beautiful begams and the same not very convincing attempt to direct this indignation not against the husband who commits this injustice but the low-class (and therefore contemptible) women whose beauty, it seems, compels him to commit it. And the same moral emerges - that a man should seek romance with one lawful wife, and that the marriage relationship should be one cemented by romantic love as well as by mutual recognition of duty.

The other aim was a wider one, though, once again, not a new one - to inculcate the superiority of new ways of life over the old. Here the great interest of Sair i Kohsār lies in the picture it gives of the further development of Sarshār's views on this theme. As compared with Jām i Sarshār

we find an altogether more sober and well thought out attitude to the British. We saw how the earlier book could be said in some measure to represent a disillusionment with the British; but this is expressed mainly by the introduction into the story of strongly negative English characters, operating as parasites on the representatives of the old order. That such people did exist is clear from such works as Knighton's The Private Life of an Eastern King, but there is an antique ring about them, whereas the Indian-hating English captain and his lady introduced in the early pages of Jām i Sarshār strike one at once as contemporary figures. In Sair i Kohsār this type appears as the one major English character in the story and the reason for the violence of Frazer's dislike of Indians is accounted for within the terms of the narrative - crudely, but not entirely unconvincingly, for where such attitudes were common all about him, one unpleasant experience of this kind could indeed have produced such a reaction. Frazer first expresses his position to another Englishman whom he meets in Naini Tal, and who, like him, believes that if Indians receive western education they become arrogant and insubordinate; Indians should learn enough English to enable them to work as clerks, but to teach them history and politics is foolishness, because this will lead them to press for more rights and British rule will be endangered. They say that Queen Victoria's proclamation [of

1858] had emboldened them even more, so that at the slightest incident they would raise an outcry and demand to know why discrimination between Englishmen and Indians was still being practised.¹

It is significant that Sarshār's rejoinder to this kind of attitude is made, not through the mouth of another Englishman, but through that of a western-educated Bengali lawyer. (Thus the point that is only vaguely implicit in Jām i Sarshār, that the victory of the new light depends mainly upon the Indians who have embraced it, is here reinforced.) Frazer is sitting in a Naini Tal restaurant when the Bengali comes in. Frazer protests strongly and demands that the manager turn him out. When the Bengali asks him why he dislikes Indians so much, Frazer replies that he had formerly mixed with Indians, but that after his bitter experience with 'Askarī he had decided that they cannot be trusted. The Bengali replies that he should mix with Indians who have received western education. Frazer says that western education only makes them worse, because then they start shouting about local self-government and the Ilbert Bill. He blames Gladstone and the Liberals for helping to bring this situation about. Formerly no-one in Parliament had ever even mentioned India, but now Bright and others have raised an outcry about it. And now, says the Bengali, Mr. Ghosh is

1. Vol.I, p.105.

standing for Parliament. "He's mad", says Frazer, "It can never be." To which the Bengali replies sarcastically that when the English can aspire to the position of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, then Indians can certainly aspire to become members of Parliament - an answer which annoys Frazer greatly. When Frazer says that the Indian way of life is "very bad", the Bengali defends them, saying that they are changing now, and that those who have had western education have already adopted new ways. Frazer replies with a sneer at Indians who have adopted English dress, saying that English dress does not endow a man with English qualities. The Bengali says that he would never claim that it did.

Frazer goes on:

مگر ملک آپ لوگ اپنے ملک کا نظام اپنے آپ
 بنا کر سکتے ہیں اور اسی پر لڑتے ہو کہ ہم کو مل سلف
 گورنمنٹ ہوں اور ہم بیویں کا نظام اپنے
 آپ کریں یہ تو نہیں کر سکتے

"I ask you, then, how do you think you can run your own country? And yet you fight to get local self-government, and to run your own municipal affairs! You can't do anything!" 1

All this of course reflects the development of Indian politics over the ten to twelve years since Sarshār had started to write. It does not mean that he has changed his attitude to British rule as such. Rather he sees such men as

1. Vol.I, pp.200-204.

Frazer as being out of harmony with the aims and methods of British rule. He still sees support for and co-operation with the British government as the proper course for the supporters of the new light to follow. His stand is that the basic British policies are sound, and that their implementation helps India along the road to progress. In this he is at one with Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān, and makes special mention of him, defending him spiritedly against his orthodox critics. He makes a Muslim speaker say:

"When Sayyid Ahmad Khān teaches us what reason dictates, there are gentlemen of our community who condemn him. They object that he preferred going on a visit to England to going on the pilgrimage to Mecca... When a man raises such objections we should ask him, 'And what is it to you if he hasn't performed the pilgrimage? Are you a qāzī or something? Can't you see what he ... is doing for his community, and with what wise proposals he is doing his best to assist the progress of the Muslims?... He has devoted - and is still devoting - his life to the betterment of Islam." 1

In some respects British policies will be found wanting, and where this is so it is up to enlightened Indians to say so and at the same time to achieve all that they can by their own efforts. Despite the Frazers, he sees the encouragement of independence of thought and freedom of expression as one of the essential features of the new order.

1. Vol.II, pp.178-9.

"Now we are taught that we should freely express our views, and if we are in disagreement with the plans of the Government we should at once, with respect, attack them and criticise them" - whereas in former times the loyal subjects of the state were expected to act on the lines of the old verse: If the King says that day is night, one should say, 'Yes, and the moon and stars are shining.'¹ Thus his position is by now closely similar to that of the early leaders of the Indian National Congress; and as we know, he seems actually to have participated in the Madras session of 1894, only four years after Sair i Kohsār was published.

Finally, Sair i Kohsār marks a step forward in its attitude to the old order, which is more fundamentally criticised than before. Thus 'Askarī, once his eyes are opened by constant discussions with such ~~men~~ "educated young men" as "Babu Amar Kumār Bose, M.A., Mr. Nihāl ud dīn Aḥmad, Barrister, Pandit Sheo Nāth, author, and Maulvi Muhammad 'Alī Khān, B.A.",² expresses his changed views in a letter to a friend.

"It is much to be regretted that our people of Lucknow passed their lives so heedlessly in the days of the Nawabs. They still think it a fault in a man that he earns his bread by his own labour. I have no right to criticise others. I too follow this same fashion. I too am proud of what my father amassed. I never produced anything by my

1. Vol.II, p.168.

2. Vol.II, p.89 - The composition of the list is significant.

own efforts, and neither did my father produce anything." 1

In another letter to the same friend he recalls the days when if a man was appointed to a post away from Lucknow he would not see his wife and children for years together, for conditions were too dangerous to allow of their accompanying him, when disorder and anarchy were at their height, when the landlords lived each in his fortress and it needed a regular military campaign to extract the revenue from them.... Whereas now there is peace and security, and a man may go about "throwing his gold in the air" and still be secure from robbery. He concludes by telling his friend that it is people such as he, who have never worried about anything, never followed any employment, and spent their whole time in frivolous and depraved pursuits, who are injuring the country.²

In earlier works there had been no such thorough-going criticism of the old aristocracy and of their present-day descendants; this is a very substantial step forward. The emphasis is no longer merely on the obviously undesirable features of the old order - wine, opium, superstition, debauchery, and so on - nor is the solution to its ills seen in somehow preventing wicked women of the lower classes

1. Vol.II, p.92.

2. Vol.II, p.98.

treacherously seducing their noble lords and masters. The attack is on the fundamental way of life of the old aristocracy, and it is the aristocracy itself that is under attack.

Thus in Sair i Kohsār Sarshār offered more substantial intellectual fare to his readers. He also offered them a better story than he had given them before, considered purely as a story. It is the most consistently readable of all his books, a book in which the reader's interest is, in general, sustained from start to finish; and can fairly say that, with Jām i Sarshār it represents the peak of Sarshar's achievement.

CHAPTER VIII

KAMINI

In Sarshār's next book, Kāminī, we already see a distinct decline.

No text that I have seen bears any date of publication, but evidence from the book itself shows that it was published after Sair i Kohsār, for the heroine is described at one point (p.188) as including this amongst her books for reading. Saksena's statement (p.326) suggests that it was published before 1893:

"Sarshār also wrote Sair Kuhsar, Jam Sarshar, Kamni and Khudai Foujdar which is a translation of Don Quixote. About 1893 he started a serial (1) called the Khunkada-i-Sarshar..."

It is somewhat shorter than his previous works, occupying 560 pages of smaller format.

The book tells the story of a young woman named Kāminī, the daughter of a chatrī (kṣatriya) family. Her parents give her an excellent education, for she learns not only homecraft but, among other subjects, Hindī Urdū, and English too, and becomes the first chatrī girl to pass the matriculation examination. When she grows up a young man from another chatrī family hears the praises of her beauty and falls in love with her. His name is Ranbīr Singh. He too

1. 'Series' is intended.

is very handsome and well-educated. Kāminī and Ranbīr Singh get married. According to the custom of his family, Ranbīr Singh joins the army and goes to fight in Peram Island, and it is later reported that he has been killed. Thus at a very early age Kāminī becomes a widow. She is so heartbroken that she abandons the world and becomes a jogan, and goes to live in a garden far from the city. There she tries to help the villagers by her charities. She sets herself the aim of educating the village girls and for this purpose she contacts European missionaries and seeks their guidance. They are very pleased with her plan and promise to give her all the help they can. Kāminī also tries to help the women to fight against old superstitions and she becomes very popular. The fame of her beauty leads men of bad character to try to win her favour, but Kāminī remains true to her husband's memory. Whenever she is alone she grieves for her dead husband. One night she is singing sorrowful songs which express her feelings when she hears a man's voice singing in reply. At first Kāminī thinks that she is imagining this, but when the man comes into the garden she recognises him as her husband. It transpires that Ranbīr Singh was not killed. He had been taken prisoner, and the part of the fort where he was confined had been burnt down. It was naturally thought that along with other prisoners Ranbīr too was burnt to death, but he had been lucky, and with the help of a kind-hearted officer in

the army of the enemy, he and three other prisoners had escaped. After some time they had been caught and one of them had been executed. Ranbīr and the other two had made their way to Aden, and there Ranbīr's two companions fell sick and died. Ranbīr succeeded in making his way back home and thus was now reunited with Kāminī.

As usual, Sarshār has built the story around a very flimsy plot. As a study in Sarshār's art the book is not so important as its predecessors. Its main interest lies in the fact that this is the first tale set against a Hindu social background. Otherwise, with Kāminī the decline of Sarshār's powers begins. Jām i Sarshār and Sair i Kohsār had marked a virtually complete break with the fasāna tradition, representing in fact a bold step forward towards realism in the Urdu novel, but in Kāminī Sarshār again reverts to the fasāna. Thus Ranbīr, the hero of Kāminī, is described in the following terms:-

یہ وہی ہے جس نے گریہ کر کے شہزادہ کی
 زندان خدائی سے نجات پائی تھی۔
 کوئی شخص اس سے مراد اپنی آپ بیتی لکھا۔
 جہاں بڑی عیبوں کا پتلا ہی ہے۔
 شہزادہ ایسا تھا کہ حضوروں نے سکھایا تھا
 وہ تک اس سے پڑنے لگے۔ اس شہزادے

گوارا دریا میں دو پاروں پر بنا لہرو کے کھیل میں برق اور
 شہر و رضا آسمانی بھانڈے ہیں بے بدل ابرو باد سزا لہری کا
 فن ہی خوب جاتا تھا کبسا ہی منہ زور سرکش مرفق
 حیران زادہ گھڑا کیوں نہ ہو براہ پیر کے آنا تھا۔ اچھے چایک ہوا
 سے جانور بہوں میں ٹھیک نہ ہوتا یہ اسکو دودن میں ٹھیک
 بنا لیتے گوی جلائے میں یہ کیفیت تھی کہ چھو بار بوسو کے
 انعام باچکا۔ انتہا یہ کہ کتار نہ کبھی خطا نہ ہوا۔ نا کا
 اور مارا۔ لوگوں کو تعجب ہوتا تھا کہ اتنا سا لڑکا ایسا قادر ہوا
 ایسا گول جلا !!! تارا کا دعویٰ جھٹس کو تک عرب میں دویم
 کرتا تھا کشتی میں پورا ہوا ان جیسے بہوں کا کوئی لڑکا ہوا ہے
 ہارک پٹے کا دلی شوق اپنا لڑنے میں ہر اردن میں تہذیب ایک
 تو خلقی جرن آدی دوسرے باعبوت کا لڑکا جن کے گھر سے
 شجاعت پیدا ہوئی تھی تیرے باب دادا عمر بزرگ رو کے پیر
 اگر سیدانا جنگ کو بحر سے نکال دیتے تو یہ روت بہت تھی جو بچے ہیں
 سے ہر فن کے بے بدل ابرو باد نے شور مچائی اور سہ گری اور با تہذیب
 کی تہذیبی ہم۔ اسپر لہو بہ بھا کہ سرخ و سفید الباسا ہے بالکل انگریز
 ہونے ہیں اور نیکی اور صلاحیت زور تھی نہ شدید۔ انھیوں
 سڑول تک شک سے رحمت ہر عقلموں سائے میں ڈھلا ہوا تھا
 اور بھیا رنگا کر تو قاضی الباسا تھا کہ گھنٹوں انسان دلچے اور سو عورت
 حش ہش کہوں اور ستر ہی خدا کی شان کے فائل ہو جائیں کہ اگر

خدا میں تو یہ صورتیں کس نے پیدا کیں نراج میں حلیم و پاک ارسیت
 رحم اشہا سے زیادہ شکر فداصل انگریزی میں روز مرہ بہت
 اجمال و ایماں کی انگریزیوں کیسا کوئی فرق نہیں
 انگریزی شرمول سے بہتر خاصا سی اردو میں بہت
 اچھی دستاویزہ حال جان تو لے قابل ہے عجیب (۱)

"By his twentieth year Ranbīr Singh became so expert in all the arts of combat... (2) that none could equal him. He became a very brave and courageous fighter, so fearless, that even those who had taught him shrank from a contest with him. He was an excellent horseman and even at this early age he had already won two competitions. He was also famous for his skill at polo, and in jumping obstacles, he was well acquainted with veterinary science, and no matter how unruly and bad-tempered a horse might be he could train it. Horses which other excellent riders had not been able to train over a period of years he could master in no time. He was such a good shot that he had won prizes on six separate occasions. In fact he never missed his mark. People used to wonder how such a young boy could shoot so well. He was so expert a swordsman that he could cut a buffalo in two with a single blow.

His prowess as a wrestler was such as other wrestlers attain only after many years of experience [His prowess at unarmed combat is then described.] Brave by nature, he was a son of those Rājput̄s among whom bravery itself

1. pp.21-2.

2. Nine different accomplishments are listed here.

took birth. He was born in a family where all the men had been heroes on the battlefield. If the battlefield was a sea, then these were sea-dragons. From his childhood the best teachers had trained him in the arts of war. To crown all, his complexion was as fair as an Englishman's and so attractive that none had seen or heard of any to match him. He was so handsome that when he was wearing his weapons one might look at him for hours and wonder. To see him even an atheist would acknowledge the power of God, for if there is no God who then had created this handsome form? He was extremely modest, kind-hearted and generous. He could speak English like an Englishman, and his command of English prose was exceptional. He had an excellent command of Persian and Urdu. His character was praiseworthy and blameless."

This is a picture of a man without fault, and Sarshār becomes so absorbed in drawing it that he does not care to think how it could be that Ranjīt could find time not only to pass his M.A., but also to acquire such expert skills in shooting, fencing, riding, wrestling and all the arts of war. His language remains simple, but it has the same quality which we find in the descriptions of the heroes of the dāstān. The only difference is that Ranbīr Singh adds to all their accomplishments a mastery of English and of western education. If we compare this description with that of Nawab Amīn ud dīn Haidar, the hero Jām i Sarshār, we realise how far Sarshār has retreated from realism. The only other character in Sarshār's writing who can be compared with Ranbīr Singh is Azād, the hero of Fasāna i Azād, who has inherited all

the qualities of the dāstān heroes. But Fasāna i Azād is directly linked with the fasāna, where as Kāminī represents a reversion to it from an appreciably more advanced position.

Kāminī, the heroine, is described in equally glowing terms.

حسن کی نسبت تو ساری خدائی کی یہی
 رائے تھی کہ ایسی حسین خالق نہیں
 بیوٹی - سر اپا سا مجھے گاڈ صلا سوا
 کلائیوں پر وہ نور برستا تھا کہ تعریف
 مجال ہے - ہونٹوں پر شب بافت رالی
 چہرہ سج سج اللہ نے اپنے ہاتھ سے بنایا تھا۔

"About her beauty all creation agreed that no other created being was so beautiful. From head to foot her proportions were so perfect that one would have thought she had been cast in a mould. Her slender wrists defied description. Her lips were more red than rubies. Her face was fashioned by God's own hands.

When she walked, the cypress was rooted to the ground; when she spoke, flowers fell from her lips.

She knew both English and Persian, and had a complete command of Urdu. She excelled at arithmetic and even at this tender age was mature and capable. She was good at sewing and all the other housecrafts. Miss Bailey had appointed experienced teachers of respectable background in the mission, and from them she learnt to knit socks. She was also an excellent cook. When she was fifteen she made history by becoming the first ¹Jhākur girl to pass the matriculation examination." 1

This description again recalls Fasāna i Azād. The only other woman character whom Sarshār has praised in this way is Ḥusn Arā, and in spite of their modern ideas both of them remain essentially heroines of the dāstān type.

The manner of Ranbīr's falling in love with Kāminī is also entirely that of the dāstān. Ranbīr's sister-in-law and another woman are praising Kāminī. Ranbīr overhears them and falls in love with her from their description alone.¹ Even in Fasāna i Azād, which has the closest links with the dāstān, Azād falls in love with Ḥusn Arā at sight, and not from mere report. It is quite possible that Sarshār went to this older tradition because Ḥusn Arā's freedom had shocked many of his readers, and even the more broad-minded among them had criticised him for portraying her as behaving in a way unthinkable to any girl of respectable family. Their criticism was not unwarranted, and it seems to have carried weight with Sarshār, for in no subsequent work does the heroine act with the freedom he had allowed Ḥusn Arā. But while Sarshār's first reaction was towards a more realistic portrayal of women - e.g. like the Begam of Jām i Sarshār and the Begam and 'Iffat Jahān in Sair i Kohsār and in Kāminī he is back to the dāstān type of portrayal.

The same point holds good of the plot. In the dāstān and in Kāminī alike we have a story of happy lovers separated by some disaster and after endless troubles happily reunited.

1. p.33.

The only difference is the difference of period. Ranbīr and Kāminī, in spite of all their unique qualities, belong to Sarshār's own day, and there is a superficial realism in that there is no supernatural incident in the novel. Ranbīr is not made to fight magicians, nor is Kāminī kidnapped by demons. But the situation nevertheless remains essentially a dāstān situation.

After the realism of Jām i Sarshār and Sair i Kohsār, Kāminī comes as a great disappointment. What made Sarshār go back to the dāstān tradition no-one can tell, but the fact that he did so testifies to the great hold which the dāstān still had both on Sarshār and on his readers. Our disappointment is the greater because even Fasāna i Azād, and Sair i Kohsār, not to speak of Jām i Sarshār, has many merits which Kāminī cannot match. In Fasāna i Azād we are given a portrait of Sarshār's age. We see Lucknow in all its fading glory. Azād leads us to every quarter of the city and among people of all sections of society, and the result is a fascinating study. We do not find this quality in Kāminī.

Only in some minor respects is Kāminī an advance on Fasāna i Azād. There is an interval of nearly 15 years between the two books; in the rapidly changing conditions of the late nineteenth century this was a long time, and many marked changes had taken place. English education had become

much more common, and the English-educated young man was not such an unusual sight as he had been when Fasāna i Azād was written. For this reason we find a difference between Azād and Ranbīr. Azād, in spite of his modern education, remains a character from the past. He is quite at home in the darbōrs of noblemen, but when he tries to behave like a modern man he looks quite artificial. Moreover Azād's background is left completely vague; we are told nothing about his family or his education. In Kāminī on the other hand, Runbīr's family and educational background are explained. We find the same difference between Kāminī and Ḥusn Arā. Ḥusn Arā comes of a very conservative family. Her education is exceptional in that besides Persian and Arabic she has read improving books in Urdu like Mirāt ul 'Arūs and Banāt un N'ash. But nothing is said to explain how she comes to hold the advanced views attributed to her, and even in volume four she is portrayed as knowing no English. Kāminī, on the other hand, is portrayed as having been taught by the teachers from the mission. She knows English and passes her matriculation, and consequently we easily understand it when she expresses modern ideas about religious and social problems. In other respects too, the glaring contradictions in the portrayal of Ḥusn Arā's character are eliminated in Kāminī. Sarshār gives her much less freedom than he gave to Ḥusn Arā, who after approving Azād as a suitor takes her sister and goes boating

This is indeed the authentic attitude, such as one can find even at the present day. Kāminī is very deeply distressed, but she does not dare to tell her parents that she does not want to be married to the man they have chosen for her. Only her parents' second thoughts result in the proposed match being abandoned. Finally a match with Ranbīr is arranged. Here too the strict conventions are observed.

Kāminī is also a much more concise and well-knit work than Fasāna i Azād. The plot is very simple. The reader never loses the thread of the story as he does in Fasāna i Azād. If we do not find in Kāminī the artistic qualities which make Fasāna i Azād an important work in Urdu literature, at the same time we do not find either all the monotonous details which are the black spots of Fasāna i Azād.

The most surprising thing in Kāminī is the complete absence of that sense of humour, which above all others made Sarshār the most loveable writer of his time. It was his capacity to see the funny side of life which made him create his immortal character Khojī. The same humour is evident in Sair i Kohsār and even more so in the hilarious court scene in Jām i Sarshār. In Kāminī on the other hand, it is completely and inexplicably absent, and this is perhaps one of the main reasons why there is not a single memorable character in the whole volume. Apart from its language, over

which Sarshār never loses his perfect command, Kāminī could have been the work of any second-class writer.

It is a disappointment to find that though Sarshār was himself a Hindu, he has failed to create the atmosphere of the Hindu family successfully. There is no doubt that because of Muslim rule, Hindus and Muslims both used to learn Arabic and Persian, and that in the big cities the language of educated men of both communities was virtually the same, but this was not true of the women's language. Yet in Kāminī the Hindu women speak exactly the same language as the Begams of Fasāna i Azād. Thus the Hindu character Kesar says:

ہر ارے سبیاں کو بھی یہی جنون تھا ایک دن میں نے
 کہا کہ تم مجھے زہر دے دو تو بہتر ہے میں اس
 روز روز سے محنتوں کے گروہی تم کو یہ
 بدگمانی کہوں جتنی ہے
 ہر دم ازردگی غیر سبب راجع علاج
 ماکہ شتم ز لطف تو عجب راجع علاج

"My husband too once suffered from this same madness. One day I told him: 'It would be better for me if you poisoned me. Then I should be rid of this everlasting misery'. [She then quotes a Persian verse:]
 How can one cure his constant displeasure which has no cause? How can one remedy the misfortune of the loss of your love?" 1

For a poorly educated Hindu woman to use such words as بدلتی - در تیزی - ہون is unlikely enough. But not content with this, Sarshār even makes her recite couplets which would not be known even to most Muslim women. This is by no means an isolated example.

Sarshār's failure in this respect is all the more striking in view of the fact that in Sair i Kohsār he had succeeded in making the dialogue of his Hindu characters wholly convincing, and the scenes of Hindu domestic life in Mahārāj Balī's house are very well painted.

In Kāminī we find descriptions of Hindu festivals, but somehow Sarshār could not create the same atmosphere which in Fasāna i Azād made the account of the Muslim festivals of Muḥarram, 'Id and Cahalum so vivid. For example in Kāminī Sarshār describes the festival of Panchamī:

سارن کا ہینہ اجاے پاکو کی پنجھی اور ہریت
 یعنی حضرت کے دن کی چیل چیل بھی یاد رہے
 گی۔ گوڑیا پنجھی کا ہوا ہڑی خوشی کا دن ہے
 بلزور سنگم کے لڑکے گونے فیشن کے

نئے سگر خورد نہیں پرانی ہی لکیر پیٹے حافی نہیں
 زبیر سنگھ کی بڑی بھاری وجہ دھتور ٹھکرائیں کے
 ترپے اٹھ کر ہنرائی ناؤں کو بلوایا۔ باپٹھ کا
 سارے دار پٹنا ہوا یا جس کی خوشبو محلے بھوکیں
 حافی تھی نہ تانے نہ لٹانے میں جا کر نا نہیں
 نے باپٹھ سے سرد ہو یا۔ پٹے کے بعد
 ناؤں نے چوٹی سنواری۔ بال گو نڈھے
 پائو میں بہا اور لگائی۔ مانگ بندوں سے
 بھری سینڈور کا ٹیکہ لگایا ٹیڈے کے پاس
 بندیا لگائی۔ سونے کا جڑا ڈ ٹیکہ
 باندھا سر سے پائوں تک گوندنی کی
 طرح لدی ہوئی تھی۔ تھوڑے ہنسی جھمکے
 کرن پھول بالے۔ بالی۔ ہانت جھما
 کٹی۔ جگنو۔ طلہائی چوڑیاں نورتن خوشن
 پائوں میں چھڑے کڑے اور یورپور جھلے
 اسکے بعد گھاج کا سبز ڈویش۔ چار حالتہ
 آڑی پیل۔ آبی اٹلس کی چولی۔ زری۔ بولی
 مٹی بستنی کرنی۔ زری گرنٹ کا سرخ لہنگا
 اس ٹھیسے سے بناؤ چٹاؤ کیا

"It was the month of Sāvan, the fifth day of the bright half of the month, and a Thursday. The festivities of that day will long be remembered. The festival of the dolls is a day of great rejoicing. Though Balzor Singh's sons were followers of the new fashions, the women still clung to their old ways. Ranbīr Singh's elder sister-in-law Dhannū Thakrāin got up at first light and sent for Maharānī, the barber's wife, who made paste of scented herbs so fragrant that whole neighbourhood was pervaded with it. She went to the women's bathroom and the barber's wife washed her hair with scented herbs, rubbed the paste on her body and bathed her. When her hair was dry she combed and plaited it. Then she painted patterns on her feet, put bindan in the parting of her hair, made the vermilion spot on her forehead and made the ornamentation around it. Then she fixed the jewel-studded golden ornament on her forehead... From head to foot she was laden with golden ornaments like a tree laden with fruits. Her forehead, her neck, her upper arms, her wrists, her ankles and every joint of her fingers and toes were adorned with them. Her stole was green muslin, with a border of gold-embroidered lace running all round. She wore a pale blue close-fitting bodice of silk embroidered with gold, and a loose blouse of yellow silk, with a full skirt of costly material ..." 1

This tedious catalogue of toilet, clothing, and ornaments sets the tone for the whole description. The whole account is flat and uninteresting from start to finish.

Even so central an incident as the marriage ceremony is portrayed in the same flat, lifeless style. First comes a list of the names of the wedding guests, then a list of the bridegroom's apparel, then a catalogue of the customs

1. pp.59-60.

observed, and so on (cf. pp.158-9).

In many ways the Hindu marriage ceremony is a very moving one, but this long passage fails completely to convey a living atmosphere. Yet in Fasāna i Azād the descriptions of even the most minor ceremonies are alive with vivid detail. In short, Chakbast is quite right when he says:

کامین میں انھوں نے ہندوں کے طرز معاشرت
کا رنگ دکھانا چاہا ہے مگر چونکہ وہ خود اس
رنگ سے نا آشنا تھے لہذا جس جگہ انھوں نے ہند
عورتوں کی جال ڈھال اور گفتگو کا نقشہ
کھینچنے کی کوشش کی ہے اسکا قلم چلتے چلتے رنگ بیا
ہے عجیب ہو کر اس سرفخ میں بھی اندلی تہذیب
کا رنگ بھرنا پڑا ہے یا یوں کہو یہ معلوم ہوتا ہے
کہ مسلمان خاتونوں کو ہندوانہ لباس پہنا کر
تصویر کھینچی ہے۔

"In Kāminī he tried to draw a picture of Hindu social life, but he himself was not well acquainted with this life, and this is why, when he tries to portray Hindu women with their distinctive ways and modes of speech his pen fails him and he is compelled to use the same colours as he used in painting Islamic social life.... One might say that he has painted a picture of Muslim ladies in Hindu dress." 1

1. Mazāmīn i Chakbast, pp.44-45.

The second part of the book is even worse than the first. Thus, for some incomprehensible reason, Sarshār in the second half of the book makes his characters speak in verse. After Ranbīr's departure, one night Kāminī cannot sleep and she asks a maid-servant to tell her a story. For some reason she is made to speak in verse.

کہانی بچھ کوئی جھٹ پٹ سنا
 میں داری گئی سیری اچھی ہوا
 اچٹ جاتی ہے نیند آئی ہوئی
 اڈ ایسی سی ہے دل پر چھائی ہوئی
 رہا رہے بیابان سے منہ سوڑ کر
 اکبہ بچھ بن میں یاں چھوڑ کر
 اد عرہ گئے رن کے میدان میں
 تڑپتی ہوں میں یاں بیابان میں

"Tell me a story quickly, my good nanny. Sleep will not come, and sadness fills my heart since my beloved went away, leaving me desolate in this wilderness. He has gone to the battlefield, and I toss and turn in this barren jungle without rest." 1

She continues in this way for ^{many} lines, and the verse has absolutely no poetic merit.

We find Kāminī rhyming again when she advises her maid-servant Hansia not to go to Saran, who is a bad character.

1. p.256.

ہنسیا تجھ کو یہ ہوا کیا ہے
 سائے تیرے سے ہوا کیا ہے
 نئے سے سن میں القدر بے باک
 نہیں معلوم یہ بلا کیا ہے
 پھلیا مالن کے گھر تو جاتی ہے
 وہ بھڑا اندا سرن کیا ہے
 خود تیرا ارد ہے ابھی کلم سن
 گورا چٹا بھی ہے برا کیا ہے

"Hansiā what has come over you? You are worse than a prostitute! Such brazenness at so tender an age? What evil spirit has possessed you? You go off to Phulia the flower-seller's house to meet this worthless rascal Saran. Your own husband is young and fair. Why do you turn away from him?" 1

These passages in verse are absolutely out of place, and indeed ridiculous.

In the last few pages of the book Sarshār seems not to know whether he is writing a novel or a play for the late nineteenth century stage.

After Kāminī becomes a jogan, he describes a scene which would have delighted the audience of that time.

1. p.353.

دوسرے روز اندر بیکرم سنگھ کے ماسوں کے
 لڑکے کے ساتھ رستم سنگھ اور بلبھدر سنگھ اور
 گمان سنگھ باغ گئے کسی کسی سرد کو باغ میں
 نہیں آئے دینی تھی۔ حضرت یہ لوگ باغ کے اندر
 پہنچے تو عجیب حالت دیکھی ایک عورت سی مادہ
 حج رہی ہے۔ باغ بھر میں سناٹا پڑا ہوا ہے
 بالین دور اپنے کام میں مصروف ہیں۔ ایک
 گم سن نازک بدن نازک خرام ناز میں
 ناز آفریں شجر کی کپڑے پہنے ہوئے ہاتھ
 میں چھوٹی سی سناری لٹے آہستہ آہستہ
 بجاتی اور بڑی حسرت کے ساتھ جھومتی ہوئی
 گاتی ہے

"The next day, accompanied by the son of Indar Bikram Singh's uncle, Rustam Singh, Balhadra Singh and Gumān Singh went to the garden. Kāminī never allowed any [strange] man into the garden. When they entered they saw a strange scene. A female swan was feeding there. Complete silence pervaded the whole garden. At some distance women-gardeners were busy at their work, and a beautiful young girl, delicate in form, delicate in gait, clad all in saffron, was playing softly on a small sitar and singing with great pathos, as she swayed her body to and fro." 1

This scene is not merely melodramatic; it is also quite absurdly unrealistic, for it is inconceivable that Kāminī, who had always been kept in purdah, should now be allowed to live all alone in a garden and sing songs which even strangers could hear.

The climax of Kāminī's reunion with Ranbīr is also very clumsily contrived. A jogi suddenly appears in the middle of the night at the jogan's garden. Sarshār tries to build up an atmosphere of suspense, using the device of a gathering storm:

لو چند کی جمعرات اور اندھیری رات بادل
 کی فوج نکالی پلٹیں دل بادل پر کے جھانکے ہوئے -
 سلوم ہونا تھا کہ بندھیا چل بریت سے بھی کہیں زیادہ اونچے
 بہاڑ سے وہ گراب چلے گا کہ گوارہ نہیں ڈالو اور دل
 ہو جائیگا۔ اس کالی پلٹیں کے کڑکیت کا نام جنرل رعد
 تھا جس کے کڑکے کے مقابل میں اچھے اچھے کڑکیتوں
 کا کڑکے کا پانی بھرتا۔ یہ پلٹیں صلی یا کالی ٹلکے والی
 کے قہر کا نمونہ۔ در در دیوار درخت - تے - آدمی
 آسمان - زمین تمام دنیا سیاہ - ایک اندھیرا ہے
 کہ چھایا ہوا ہے اس قدر تاریکی کہ حد عمر لڑکائی
 ہے کالی جی کی صورت انہی صورت دکھائی ہے -

"It was Nauchandī Jum'erāt. The night was dark, and an army of black clouds was drawn up phalanx upon phalanx. It seemed as though from some mountain far more lofty than the Vindhya Range, a huge black shell would be fired with such force as to set the cradle of earth rocking. The herald (1) of this army was General Thunder, with whose thunderous roar no other herald's voice could compare. Indeed it seemed to be not an army, but the terrible wrath of Kālī. Houses, buildings, trees, leaves, men, earth and sky, all the world was darkened. Darkness overspread

1. Karkait - actually one who recites and sings martial poems to encourage the soldiers to battle.

the earth, darkness so black that where ever one turned one's gaze, it seemed that the image of Kālī was before one's eyes." 1

After this description Sarshār for no reason, tells us of a man who had given up drinking ten years earlier, but on that night went to a friend's house and began drinking again. Then he returns to his theme, to describe Kāminī's state of mind:

کامینی دیوانیوں کی طرح دو بجے کے قریب بلند
 سے اٹھی ایک عورت کے ساتھ ہوئی دو ماہیوں کے ساتھ ہوئی
 باغ کی درویشوں میں ٹہلنے لگی اور کوکے لگی
 بھگت ہے موری ہنسائی جوڑی بھج (۱)

"Kāminī [was] restless, like one possessed.... At about two o'clock she got up from her bed, and taking one woman attendant and two flower-women with her, she started walking up and down the garden paths singing,

"I am separated from my beloved..." (2)

After two hours she hears a man singing:

"You are not separated from your beloved."

Kāminī sings her song again, and the unseen man sings the same reply. Kāminī then sings in the rāg of Behāg:

"It is not good to make fun of faqirs."

The man sings back in the same rāg,

"Do faqirs ever make fun of others?"

1. p.547.

2. p.549.

This question and answer lasts for some time, and when the servants go out of the garden to see who is there they find a very handsome jogi, accompanied by two servants carrying a litter. Kāminī does not recognise him, but when the jogi calls her "Kamman" (an endearing diminutive of her name), she faints. The jogi puts her in the litter (which, it seems, had been brought for that purpose) and she is carried to the house in the garden. The jogi asks the servants, who have failed to recognise him, to leave Kāminī with him, but they refuse. At this stage an old servant comes in and recognises that the jogi is Ranbīr.

It is at this stage that Sarshār explains the mystery of Ranbīr's presence. Many of the details are so fantastic as to be almost supernatural. Kāminī can still not believe that the jogi is Ranbīr, and instead of telling her the story of his escape (which anybody else in these circumstances would have done) Ranbīr quotes to her a letter which she had written to him, and this convinces her. Thus they are reunited, and presumably live happily ever after.

The book ends abruptly and leaves the reader dissatisfied.

The truth is that the main interest of Kāminī lies not in its qualities as a story, but in the fact that Sarshār in the course of it expounds his ideas on specifically Hindu social problems - and these had not been made the theme of any previous work.

In this respect the importance of Kāminī is considerable. His main preoccupation is with problems of Hindu marriage reform. He writes:

مردوں میں ہی تو صحبت ہے کہ شادی میں
 لڑکا اور لڑکی دونوں کے بس ہو جانے ہیں۔ زبان
 سے آکر کوئی لفظ نکالیں تو قیامت ہو جائے بے شرم
 بے حیا لہذا میں اور لڑکی کی صحبت کا زعم نہ
 ہو۔

"The trouble with us is that in the matter of marriage both the boy and the girl are helpless. If they utter a single word of protest, they bring a storm about their ears. They are called brazen and shameless, and for the girl it would be better if she had never been born." 1

To illustrate the advantages of female education Sarshār creates the character of Kāminī, who is an educated girl in the modern sense and yet at the same time modest and virtuous, and aware of all that is good in Indian society. Through her he shows that an educated woman is a real companion in marriage. When Kāminī becomes a widow she serves society by teaching girls and by helping other women to fight superstition. In this way she wins the respect of everybody.²

1. p.103.

2. pp.528-29.

Sarshār also discusses at length the pitiable condition of Hindu widows. For greater emphasis, at the point in the story when Kāminī becomes a widow, he writes of an unusual custom which was followed in Ranbīr's family. On the seventh day after the husband's death his relatives and friends are called together. In their presence, the bangles of the widowed girl are broken into pieces, all her ornaments are snatched from her, and she is made to wear a sari stained with patches of grey and black and impregnated with camphor, like her husband's shroud. Dressed in this sari, which is specially prepared for the occasion, the widow is made to look at herself in the mirror so that her widowhood may be impressed upon her. Sarshār does his best to impart great pathos to the description. Thus he even makes one character say:

نگہ آج کی یہ رسم خدارا کون غارت کرے
 سنی کی رسم سے زیادہ بے رحمی کی ہے اور ایک
 رسم ہے بھی اب لوگوں میں بڑی ظلم کی رسم ہے
 کہ جو ذرا ذرا سے لڑکیاں جو چھ سات سات برس
 کی معصوم بیچاریاں سوہ ہو جاتی ہیں انکی دکھاری
 شادی نہیں کرتے یہ بڑا غضب ہے اس سے تو
 آنکھ مار ہی ڈالو۔

"May God destroy this evil custom which is going to be observed today. It is more cruel even than the custom of sati. And there is another cruel custom among you people; innocent young girls - some of them little mites of six or seven - are widowed and then cannot be married again. This is a terrible injustice; it would be better to kill them than to treat them so cruelly." 1

To illustrate the same point he introduces another character. After Kāminī has turned jogan, a young woman comes to her one day and sits down beside her:

جوگن نے دیکھا تو سبلی کھلی دھوئی ہاتھ پونے ہوئے
 نہیں ایسے بھی آتے بدن کا گورا رنگ ظاہر ہونا تھا گدڑی
 کے لال-ہاتھ پاؤں کان گلہ سب خالی قطع سے کچھ
 گئی کہ یہ بھی بری طرح راتہ بیوہ ہے۔ اسپر بھی آسمان
 میٹ پڑا ہے اس عمر میں رنڈا یا بھلنا پڑا۔

"The jogan [Kāminī] saw that she was wearing a dirty sari but in spite of this her fair body shone through it shining like a ruby among rags. Her hands, arms, feet, ears and neck were bare of ornaments. Kāminī realised that, like her, she too must be a widow. She too had suffered this calamity in her prime, and had to bear the tribulations of widowhood." 2

Later on the woman says:

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1. p.418.
 2. p.450.

نوروز کی اروا کی بھی جب بھونری پھری دہرے
پہنے رائے ہو گئی۔ تب سے اب تک بیسبائی سے
جیتی ہوں۔

"I was nine years old when I was married,
and I lost my husband a month later. Since
then, shameless one that I am, I continue
to live."

She goes on to tell Kāminī how badly young men behave
towards her and how this makes her life even more miserable.
Kāminī herself speaks of the way in which widows are treated:

ہر کچھ ہے ہنر و زور کی ہواؤں بیچاروں پر جو
سختیاں ہوتی ہیں انکو وہی جھیل سکتی ہیں در سہری ہیں
جھیل سکتی ہیں مگر ان سختیوں سے ان کا دل کڑھتا
ہو گیا یا نہیں مر جائے تو اس زندگی سے اچھا سمجھتی ہوگی
یا نہیں عروہ سمجھتی ہوگی
کیا میرے بھرتے ان کو نہیں بنا باپ ہے ابا ایلے جان
ہیں ہے پائے انیر یا کیا کم مصیبت ہے کہ رائے
ہوہ ہو گئیں۔ ان کی دہلوانی تیر فرض ہے کہ انکو
کلمے کو ٹھیس نہ لگے نہ یہ کہ ہر قدم ہر اور ہر بات میں
ان پر ثابت کریں کہ وہ بدوہ ہیں پائے یہ کلمے رجمی
ہے یہ ہو کسی سفید ہو گئے ہیں۔ یہ جھیل جان اور ہلا کر
کی عادتیں ہم نے کیوں سیکھی ہیں؟ ان بے گناہوں کی

جاں کے ہم کبوں دشمن ہو گئے اچوں کے کدا تصور کیا ہے؟
 اور کبوں جانے در میں بے چاری لڑکیوں نے دولہا کا سہم
 بھی میں دیکھا ہائے جانی ہی ہیں کہ دولہا کسوں کہنے۔
 ہیں..... سو عقلاسی کہہ گا رہیں کہ اپنی نادستی میں
 ہماری اور تمھاری بیوقوفی سے بھونری پھری گی ہی ان
 ذوادا سے بچوں کا ہون ہونا سہم ہی ہے

"Truly the hardships which Hindu widows undergo are such that no one else could survive them. But is this not a grievous injustice to them? Must they not feel that death is better than the life they lead? Surely they must. Were not they created by God? Are they not living beings? Alas! Is it not hardship enough that they have been widowed? It is our duty to treat them with every consideration, and to see to it that their feelings are not hurt - not to impress upon them at every step and at every turn that they are widows. How cruel we are! How callous we have become! Why have we learnt the ways of Chingiz Khān and Halākū and made ourselves the mortal enemies of these innocent creatures? What crime have they committed? And leaving all else aside, consider the plight of those poor girls who have never seen their husband's face, never known what a husband is, ... and whose only crime is that without their knowledge, you and I in our foolishness have married them off. When these girls, who are no more than children, are widowed, what a cruel situation it is!" 1

This is the first and the last time Sarshār deals with this problem. He appeals most passionately to Hindu society to treat its widows properly, but he does not stop

1. p.514.

at that. He tries to prove that according to the Hindu religion widow re-marriage is permissible. The jogan (Kāminī) is discussing with her companion (who is accompanied by her husband) the probable intentions of a man who has been pursuing her:

جوگن - شاید اس کا مطلب یہ ہے کہ میری اور اسکی
 شادی ہو جائے
 درگا - اے یہ تلخ کھا کہتی ہو جوگن - ہندو
 بیوہ کی شادی کیسی -
 جوگن - ہوتی ہے اور ہوتی تھی اور ساشتر
 کی رو سے جائز ہے -
 درگا - ہم سہ ماہیں گے - سہ ماہ ہو جائے
 جوگن - میں تائبوں سے اور بڑے بڑے بندوں
 کے کلام سے نا بہت کر دوں
 لالہ - ایسے پہلو بھی جوگن سے اتفاق ہے اب
 رقم نہیں ہے یہ سمجھنا مگر ہندوؤں میں
 بیوہ کی شادی جائز ہے -
 جوگن - اب بھی ہوتی ہے یونا - ناسک اور کاشی
 کے بعض بعض بندوں نے کھلے بندوں
 اور بعض نے پوشیدہ طور پر رادی
 ہے کہ بیوہ کی شادی ساشتر کی رو
 سے جائز ہے -

"Jogan: Probably he wants to marry me.

Durgā: What are you saying? How can a Hindu widow remarry?

Jogan: It was practiced in the past and is still practiced, and is permitted by the shāstras.

Durgā: I cannot believe it. It would be disastrous.

Jogan: I can prove it both from books and from the words of the most distinguished pandits.

Lālah: I too agree with the jogan. I grant you it is no longer customary, but it is permissible to Hindus.

Jogan: It is practiced even now, and some pandits in Poona, Nasik and Kashi have declared (some privately and some quite openly), that according to the shāstras widow remarriage is permissible." 1

The last quotations are important not only to the understanding of Kāminī but to the understanding of Sarshār. Throughout his writings he raises his voice against the great social injustice shown to widows by Hindu society, and even goes further and advocates widow remarriage. All his novels have an aim, but never before had he expressed himself so forcibly as he does here in speaking of the condition of Hindu widows. Unfortunately his artistic skill does not keep pace with his emotions, and the book never rises above the level of lifeless propaganda. It leaves no lasting impression on the reader and achieves no important place in Urdu literature.

1. pp.509-510.

CHAPTER IX

THE DECLINE OF SARSHAR'S ART

In 1894 Sarshār recited a qaṣīda which he had composed at the Kashmiri Social Conference. In it he addresses himself in the following lines:-

ہے اس کمال پر لیکن ہزار بار اسوس
 کہ تو نے قدر نہ کیے جانی اپنی خود زنیہار
 کمال کے لئے لازم جو ہے نہ حال فرد
 اب قطرہ کے پہلے تھا قلم ز خار
 نہ اب و تاب وہ انگلی سے نہ رنگ دروب
 نہ وہ شاہ مضمون کے سہول کے خار
 نہ وہ حافظہ ہی رہا وہ نہ قوت ادراک
 ہے کہاں سے ہر اک شے کی حد ہے آخر کار

"But a thousand regrets that despite the height of attainment you did not know your own value. From every height there must needs be a decline, and that mighty ocean is now no more than a single drop. That former brilliance has gone - that colourfulness has faded and the roses have faded in the cheeks of your beloved themes. Your memory fails you, nor have you the same perceptive power. How could it be otherwise? For in the end all things reach their final limit." 1

Thus Sarshār himself was aware of the decline which every critic has noted. This decline reaches its most marked extent in the series of short novels collectively called

1. Quoted in Mazāmīn i Chakbast, p.52.

Khūm - Kadā i Sarshār and comprising Kurūm Dhum, Bichrī Dulhan, Tūfān i Betamīzī, Pī Kahān and Hashsho.

It is not clear over what period these works were written. Chakbast writes that Sarshār began the series before leaving Lucknow for Hyderabad¹ and Saksena says that the series was started in about 1893.² Neither of them gives any date for the completion of the series, and I have not been able to discover the dates of publication of any of these works. Tūfān i Betamīzī appears to be completely unobtainable and cannot therefore be considered in this chapter. But a reading of the remaining novels of the series compels one to conclude that in them one sees not only the decline, but the end of Sarshār as a novelist. Internal evidence would suggest that Kurūm Dhum was the first of the series, that it was followed by Bichrī Dulhan, and Hashsho, and that Pī Kahān was the last, for if we take them in this order we can trace a clear and rapid decline throughout the series. Even the first, Kurūm Dhum, does not approach the standard of any previous work.

Kurūm Dhum could easily be a chapter from Fasāna i Azād. Here we get the same sort of situation as we find in those parts of Fasāna i Azād which deal with Husn Arā. Like Husn Arā, the heroine of Kurūm Dhum too is a beautiful girl. She is named Naushāba and lives in a house at some distance

1. op.cit., p.47.

2. p.236.

from the city. One day she hears a town crier announcing that the man with whom she is in love is going to be hanged. Naushāba faints from the shock. A hakīm is called, but he cannot do anything for her, and all hope of saving her life is lost. Fortunately Naushāba 's elder sister is married to a young man of modern outlook, and he calls a Bengali doctor, who cures her. When she regains her consciousness she makes enquiries about the town crier's announcement. Everybody tells her that the man who is going to be hanged is a robber named Geṇḍā Singh. On hearing this Naushāba recovers. After some time, with the help of the doctor, she gets a letter from the young man she loves, and this tells how the town crier had been bribed by Naushāba 's cousin to call out the wrong name. Naushāba now tells her sister all about her love and the incident which nearly caused her death. Her sister approves of her choice.

Naushāba 's cousin Choṭe Mirzā is a robber, and a very bad character. He asks her father's permission to marry her, but is refused.

Naushāba 's father is a very old man. One day he falls ill. Choṭe Mirzā and his friends surround the house so that no one can leave it, but a maid-servant slips out and informs Naushāba 's brother-in-law, who is a tahsīldār, and before Choṭe Mirzā can reduce Naushāba to submission, the tahsīldār comes with the police. Choṭe Mirzā escapes, but

some of his friends are arrested. When Naushābāh's father recovers from his illness Choṭe Mirzā tells him all about Naushābah's secret love affair. The old man is furious. Choṭe Mirzā impresses him so much that he agrees to have Naushābah married to him. Hearing this decision, Naushābah's sister and brother-in-law get her married to the young man she loves, without informing their father. When the father hears the news, he too gives her his blessing.

We have already had essentially the same story related in Fasāna i Azād, in the episode where Muḥammad 'Askarī gets the false news of Azād's marriage printed in a newspaper. Ḥusn Arā believes it and falls ill, and the whole family despairs of her life. Hakīms are called, but their treatment is ineffective. In the end a doctor is called, and he cures her. The only difference in the plot is the difference between the characters of Muḥammad 'Askarī and Choṭe Mirzā. Choṭe Mirzā is a cruel robber while Muḥammad 'Askarī is a timid hakīm who takes fright at Ḥusn Arā's illness and gives up all intention of marrying her. Thus except for a few details and the ending of the story there is nothing in Kurum Dhum but an echo of Fasāna i Azād.

Kurum Dhum is a short work of 88 pages and is the best of all the books in Khum Kadā i Sarshār. It is at any rate much less rambling than the other novels in this series, and with a few changes and some abridgement it could make a

fairly good short story.

Bichrī Dulhan is an even weaker story than Kurūm Dhum. It is a short work of 96 pages and tells the story of a young doctor named Man Mohan who is watching a river in flood when he sees a woman being carried away on a thatched roof. The doctor's servant rescues her, and the doctor takes her to stay in his house. Since her name is not known people simply call her Bībī. She is a married woman, for there is vermilion in the parting of her hair. The fame of her beauty spreads, until one day the doctor receives an anonymous letter telling him that at the end of the month he must take Bībī to a certain place and hand her over to the people whom he will find waiting for her there. The letter tells him also that if he fails to do this his life will be in danger. Man-Mohan tells his neighbour Tīsmār Singh, (who is a bad character though he claims to be a friend) and Tīsmār Singh promises to help him. Bībī is very friendly with Tīsmār Singh's sister Rādhikā. One day Rādhikā hears her brother conspiring with his friends to attack Man Mohan unless he will hand over Bībī to him. She tells Bībī what she has heard and it is now discovered that it was Tīsmār Singh who had written the anonymous letter. Man Mohan now tells Tīsmār Singh that he will hand over Bībī to the writer of the letter only if he should be able to prove that he is her husband. On the dark night when Tīsmār Singh is waiting in the appointed

place with his supporters, a coach draws up in which Bibī, guarded by servants, is seated. She hears Tīsmār Singh's voice; she whispers to the servants that she has recognised her husband's voice and has no objection to being handed over to him. Accordingly she goes with him and is installed in the zanāna of his house. Tīsmār Singh and his supporters now take off their arms and start a drinking bout. All of a sudden they find themselves surrounded by police. They are caught unawares, and after a half-hearted resistance are all arrested.

Rādhikā now sends a messenger to inform her father of what has happened. Her father is a robber known as Bare Thākur. In spite of the fact that he is very ill he comes home, but he has to take to his bed, where his condition grows worse. On his death-bed he confesses his sins and tells the story of a great robbery which he had committed, in which the caravan of a very rich merchant was plundered and everyone killed except for two men. These two had a son and daughter respectively who were later married to each other while they were still children. The two fathers later joined forces with Bare Thākur.

The boy was adopted by a rich landlord who had him educated. Ultimately he became a doctor. The girl, whose arm was tattooed with her name Man Mohanī, was brought up by a robber's wife. All trace of her had been lost when she was

carried away in a flood. Man Mohan was now called and his father, who had come with Baṛe Thākar, recognised him. Bibī too was called, and when her arm was examined she was discovered to be Man Mohanī. Thus the story ends with Man Mohan and Man Mohanī happily reunited.

Much of the incident and description in this story repeats those of the Shabsawār episode in Fasāna i Azād.

Here and there the description and the dialogue is lively and realistic. For instance, the scene where the heroine of the novel goes to be handed over to the robbers is well portrayed and Baṛe Thākar's narrative at the end of the book shows a greater realism and concern for vital detail than anything in the Shabsawār theme in Fasāna i Azād. Such passages make one realise that if Sarshār's power as a writer had still been developing he could in Bichrī Dulhan have created a good realistic picture of contemporary life in Avadh. Sleeman's narrative shows how common it was in the years just before annexation for landlords and men of good family to supplement their income by armed robbery, forming their tenantry into armed bands whenever they needed them for this purpose. The general prevalence of this practice and the good family of those who engaged in it led to a state of affairs in which society accepted and even honoured these robbers, and we see a reflection of this in the closing scene of Bichrī Dulhan where Baṛe Thākur's sick

bed is visited by all the eminent and respected men of the locality. But Sarshār's powers were in decline, and instead of being a good realistic social novel on an important aspect of life in Avadh Bichrī Dulhan is a sketchy, poorly-constructed, and altogether third-rate work.

Hashsho and Pī Kahāñ are the worst of the whole series. Neither story has even a coherent plot.

Hashsho (76 pages, no date of publication) is the story of an educated man named Jotī Parshād who drinks to excess. His drinking bouts are often followed by fits of near-insanity. One day he hears a lecture by an American lady on the evils of drinking, and this impresses him so much that he immediately takes an oath that he will not only abstain from drinking himself, but will also do all he can to prevent others drinking. He comes out of the meeting shouting at the top of his voice about the great evils of drinking. In the street he meets a bottle-seller, and because wine is kept in bottles, Jotī Parshād finds a pretext to send him away and then breaks all his bottles. Next he goes to a wine-shop, where he again finds an excuse to send the shopkeeper away on an errand and in his absence pours dust in the wine and breaks all the vats. Then he goes to another town and rents a house belonging to a wine-seller. When after some time the master of the house comes to collect the rent, he finds that his house has been demolished and the bricks and iron sold

off. After committing many other foolish acts of this kind, an uncle sends him in the care of a maulvi to a lunatic asylum, but Jotī Parshād manages to convince the superintendent that it is the maulvi who is mad, and the maulvi is detained in the asylum. The greatest part of the book is taken up with acts of folly of this kind. One day he has an encounter with all the people who had suffered great losses on his account - the bottle-seller, the wine-seller, and the landlord whose house he had demolished. They attack him, and it is with the greatest difficulty that he escapes. This incident sobers him, and he concludes that he may drink provided that he does so in moderation. Accordingly he delivers a lecture to this effect, and with this lecture the story ends.

The book is supposed to be humorous, but Jotī Parshād's mad actions evoke no laughter. If this book shows anything, it is Sarshār's own obsession with the evils of drinking. Chakbast has spoken in his essay of Sarshār's weakness for drink and testified to his horror of drunkenness and his obsession with its evils. Hashsho is not the only work in which this obsession is evident. In Fasana i Azād in Jām i Sarshār and in Sair i Kohsār he writes page after page on the evils of drinking. But there is a difference between Hashsho and these earlier works. For example, in Jām i Sarshār he was capable of portraying the drunken

ravings of the nawab and his courtiers with a satirical zest which is really amusing, whereas the Sarshār who wrote Hashsho was no longer capable of making his readers laugh. Hashsho is his last desperate effort to write a comic novel, and it is a complete failure.

Pī Kahān¹ is no better than Hashsho, and is even more incoherently put together. Thus in the first half of the book Sarshār deliberately mystifies his reader by presenting one of the major characters as a boy, though it is in fact the heroine disguised as a boy. Half way through the book this ruse is dropped, yet throughout the book there is no indication as to why it was ever adopted, and it plays no part whatever in the plot of the narrative. Indeed it is only by piecing together the scattered information which the story gives that any coherent narrative can be worked out. When this has been done the story that emerges is as follows.

A young boy and a girl fall in love with each other. The girl is the daughter of wealthy parents and the boy is the adopted son of his tutor.

The boy's father had died when he was very young and when his mother had married again, his cruel step-father had turned him out of the house and he had been cared for by his

1. The only edition I have been able to find was published in 1919 at Seth Kundan Lāl Press, Lucknow. It seems most unlikely that it had not been printed before. In the 1919 edition it is 88 pages long.

teacher, who had also been engaged as tutor to the girl with whom the boy had now fallen in love.

When the girl's father discovers their love he expels both the tutor and the boy from his house, for since the boy's family background is obscure, he considers him an entirely unsuitable match. The boy's step-father dies. The boy goes back to his home and inherits a large estate and the title of Rājā. But in spite of all the luxury in which he lives, his health begins to deteriorate. His mother guesses the reason for his illness and sends the teacher to the girl's father with a proposal of marriage. The girl too cannot bear the separation from the boy she loves and goes mad. When her father comes to know that the boy is a rich man's son and has inherited a very big estate, he accepts the proposal for the marriage. The boy's condition is now critical, so they all decide to go to the boy's house so that the marriage can be performed there. But by the time they reach there the boy is at death's door. He looks at his beloved once and dies. The girl too kisses him once, and falls dead.

This reconstruction of the outline of the story shows that apart from the falsity of the ending there is nothing in the theme as such which would have prevented a good novel being constructed upon it. But the complete incoherence of the book is only one of the many faults. The characterisation is entirely unconvincing and the dialogue very often so

absurd as be laughable.

In short this whole series was written in a period when Sarshār's inspiration had already failed him - so much so that one feels that only Sarshār's name made it possible for these works to be published and read.

Chakbast gives his opinion of them in these words:

روا قہمی یہ ناول اس امر کی شہادت دیتے ہیں
کہ ایک زبردست مصنف کا کمالی القدر زوال پذیر
ہو سکتا ہے بہتر ہوتا کہ صفت ریشا اس
ضمیرہ کی طرف رجوع ہی نہ ہوتے -

"Indeed these novels show to what extent the art of a great writer can decline. It would have been better if Sarshār had never turned his steps towards this tavern." 1

It must be admitted that this opinion is entirely just.

1. Mazāmīn i Chakbast, p.47. The word 'tavern' is a play on the title of the series. Khumkadā means tavern.

CHAPTER X

THE TRANSLATIONS

In order to complete the account of Sarshār's work it is necessary briefly to survey his translations. What these were, was briefly indicated in Chapter I. They include articles translated for publication in the Urdu periodical of the provincial Department of Public Instruction (not available here) and, according to his own account, a political pamphlet of Dr. Hunter, and a work entitled Shākh i Nabāt, on the history of Egypt, which he translated into Urdu from the Persian. However, as stated in Chapter I, I have been unable to find either these books or any other reference to them. We are left, therefore, with four major works, of which the originals were respectively, D. Mackenzie Wallace's Russia, Lord Dufferin's Letters from High Latitudes, Don Quixote, and The Arabian Nights.

The choice of the first two was not fortuitous, for Dufferin had become Viceroy of India in 1884, and Wallace came with him as his Private Secretary; and Munshi Nawal Kishor, Sarshār's employer and publisher, evidently considered that it would be an appropriate expression of his loyal regard to publish translations of their books. At the same time, it seems that Wallace's book at least was one likely to interest Urdu readers; at any rate, the Russo-Turkish war

had occupied a great deal of space in the columns of Avadh Akhbār, as we saw in Chapter III, and a fairly widespread interest in Russia seems to have existed. Accordingly Sarshār was commissioned to translate the book into Urdu, and the translation appeared in 1887. Nawal Kishor had obtained from Wallace a short biographical sketch, and this with a preface of his own, appeared both in English and Urdu versions before the translation of the work itself. Sir Alfred Comyns Lyall, then Lieutenant Governor of the North-Western Provinces and Chief Commissioner of Oudh, had (to use Nawal Kishor's own words) conferred upon him the great honour, for which he could not adequately express the gratitude that he owed, of allowing him to dedicate the translation to him.¹

The book is beautifully printed on better paper than any other work of Sarshār. It has 626 pages and at the end there is a translation of the index to the English original giving the page references in terms both of the English original work and of the Urdu translation. Owing to the undetected mistake of some none too intelligent calligrapher, the columns giving the Urdu references are all headed ṣafha i fārsī - "Persian page".

Sarshār had undertaken a difficult task. Not only was he translating a book on themes for which no adequate vocabulary yet existed in Urdu; his own knowledge of English does not seem to have been good enough to enable him fully to

1. cf. Preface, p.4.

understand his original. Hence he not only loses its lucidity but quite often conveys quite the wrong sense. Thus, for example, Wallace writes about the Tatars:

"The roguish twinkle in his small piercing eyes contrasts strongly with the sombre, stolid expression of the Finnish peasants sitting near him." 1

Sarshār translates this as follows:

انہی چیتوں سے معلوم ہوتا ہے کہ یہ بدسواش
ہیں اور ان کے مقابلے میں جو قوم کے لوگ
بیٹھے ہیں وہ جمیلی بلی دکھائی دیتے ہیں

This translation is either an extremely careless translation, or else, more probably, Sarshār failed to understand the meanings of "roguish", "sombre" and "stolid". An English translation of his Urdu would read: "It seems from their appearance that they are scoundrels, and in contrast the Finns sitting there look as though butter would not melt in their mouths." Thus the sense of original is misrepresented.

In another place he translates a sentence describing someone in Moscow as being like "a bull in a china shop"²:

ماسکو میں اسکا درجہ وہی تھا جو
چین کے بازاروں میں سانڈ کا
درجہ ہے۔ کیونکہ میں گویا وہ پوجا
جاتا تھا

1. p.7 of the translation.

2. p.385.

3. p.373.

"His status in Moscow was like that of a bull in the bazars of China, because in Moscow he was virtually worshipped."

Here again Sarshār has simply failed to understand the English idiom. He has assumed that the Chinese, like the Hindus, regard the bull as sacred, and has translated accordingly.

The faults in the translation are not only those which arise from a failure to understand the original. Many are due to simple carelessness. In some cases the translation conveys the exact opposite of the sense of the original. Thus "secular books" (page 38) is translated منہجی کتابیں "religious books". There are many words for which good Urdu equivalents could have been found, but Sarshār does not take the trouble to select the appropriate words in general use. He finds it easier to coin unfamiliar words.

The following is a list of words selected at random, which are either translated badly or mistranslated:

<u>Original</u>	<u>Sarshār's translation.</u>	<u>Correct translation.</u>
Autumnal foliage		
Autumnal foliage.	فصل فریض کی پتیاں	سوسم فزراں کی پتیاں
Moderate salary.	مستدل معاوضہ	معمولی تنخواہ
Blackhead	سر درد	اشق
Confidently	مقتدیت سے	اعتماد سے
Doubts	خیالات خاسد	شکیات

<u>Original</u>	<u>Sarshār's translation.</u>	<u>Correct translation</u>
It was certainly not much.	گوئیہ اہم بات نہ تھی	گوئیہ کوئی بڑی رقم نہ تھی
Unqualified	بے وجہ	پوری پوری
Extortion	زیادہ ستانی	لوٹ
Introduce	ماہم شناسا کراتے ہیں	تعارف کراتے ہیں
Master of the house.	ایس خانہ	گھر کے مالک
Interested	لطف آتا ہے	دلچسپی ہے

Mistakes of this kind abound throughout the translation.

In the above list Sarshār's Urdu versions are in most cases inappropriate rather than actually incorrect, and the words used are at any rate correct Urdu forms. But examples of incorrect Urdu forms also occur quite frequently. For example, Sarshār uses *پہر ظاہر* instead of *ظاہر* and *پہر دروی* instead of *دروی*.

Even Sarshār's translation of the title of the book is a rather unhappy one. The English title is simply "Russia", but Sarshār goes in for something more elaborate and calls his version

اعمال نامہ روس یعنی ترجمہ تاریخ روس

Literally translated, this means "A Record of the Deeds of Russia" [Rūs], i.e. a translation of the History of Russia [Rūsīya]." The use of two distinct words for "Russia" is odd; but then the whole translation is odd. 'Amāl nāma - "record

of the deeds" - has only one sense in Urdu; it means the complete account of one's actions in life, written by the recording angels and presented before God on the Day of Judgement, when one is judged and emerges either surkh-rū ('red-, or bright-faced' - i.e. triumphantly vindicated) or rū-siyah ('black-faced', or put to shame and condemned).

'Rūsiyah' is also acceptable Persian for 'Russia'. It seems that Sarshār could not resist the temptation to indulge in some not very distinguished word-play, suggesting that the 'history of Russia' was like the record of deeds of a man who would be found wanting on Judgement Day. But even 'history of Russia' is misleading, since the book is, as its English title suggests, an all-embracing account, in which history forms only one element.

Thus the carelessness and the impatience which is evident in all the Sarshār's writings mars the whole translation, and whereas the English original is very readable, the Urdu version is dull, and makes difficult reading.

The translation of Dufferin's Letters from High Latitudes followed in 1888. The title page of the edition in the India Office Library describes it as a translation into Urdu, but the book itself is in Persian, so the title page is presumably a calligrapher's error. The book has 264 pages and is illustrated by a number of etchings. Why it was decided to produce a Persian, rather than an Urdu

translation is not at all clear. I am not fully competent to judge its quality, but the language appears to be quite good, although in the style of Indian writers of Persian. [It was not until six years later, in 1894, that Khudāī Faujdār, the 'translation' of Cervantes' Don Quixote was published. Sarshār tells us in the introduction that he had long wanted to translate it, and when at length he had leisure to undertake it, he suggested the project to Munshi Nawal Kishor and got his consent. He found the task so interesting that he would have liked to put all other work aside and devote all his time to it. He writes that the book is so amusing that no matter how depressed the reader may be, he cannot help laughing at the exploits of the foolish knight.¹ The same ideas are expressed at the end of the book, and it is quite certain that Sarshār translated it because he found the book a hilarious comedy which could not fail to make people laugh. This is clear both from the introduction and from the adaptation itself (for that is really what Khudāī Faujdār is). He fails to see that if this had been all there was to the book, it would never have come to hold the position it enjoys today as one of the world's classics.

Khudāī Faujdār - 'the godly warrior' - in Sarshār's book is a crazy fool, never the dreamer who can entrap one for the moment in his world of fantasy, never the child in his world of make-believe for whom we have a sympathetic

1. Introduction, p.2.

smile. Unlike Don Quixote, Khudāī Faujdar is a braggart^r, a fool and a bully; in short, he is altogether a different character from his original. Sancho is similarly transformed. In Sarshār's hands he becomes an ignorant idiot, appropriately named Buddhū, and the relation between Khudāī Faujdār and Buddhū is that between a blustering fool and his half-witted servant.

In face of this fundamental distortion there is little merit in the fact that for the most part, Sarshār preserves fairly faithfully the actual narrative of the original, although the incidents are sometimes related in a different order, and some are omitted (including some of the best).

For some of these weaknesses it is possible that the responsibility lies with the English translation which Sarshār used as the basis of his Urdu version. We do not know which translation he used, but J.M.Cohen has noted that Don Quixote has been translated many times and that all translators have been prone to omit passages they could not understand.

Sarshār's adaptation attempts to Indianise his original, changing the names of persons and places, sometimes changing incidents in the story, substituting Indian dishes for European where he is describing food, and introducing (in the traditional Urdu narrative manner) verses from the Urdu poets in great profusion. (Again in the traditional

manner, these sometimes have little bearing on the situation into which they are introduced.) It is arguable that this method is quite permissible, but Sarshār certainly does not make a success of it, and we feel as we read that, for all his universality, Don Quixote is a character firmly rooted in the soil of his native land, and that when Sarshār tries to uproot him and dress him in Indian garb, he looks like a withered tree adorned with tinsel and paper flowers. It is not surprising, therefore, that Khudāī Faujdār has never really won the hearts of Indian readers. For the student of Sarshār its main interest lies in the striking evidence which it provides of how largely unconscious was the profound influence which Don Quixote exercised upon him. We have already seen how much he drew from Cervantes when he created his immortal character Khojī. Yet when he approaches Don Quixote consciously as a translator and adaptor, he completely misses the very quality which he had unconsciously absorbed to such superb effect.

The last of the major translations was that of Alif Laila - the thousand and one nights. Sarshār's version, entitled Alif Laila, was published by Nawal Kishor in 1901.¹ It occupies two volumes totalling 1,050 pages. Here Sarshār was not breaking fresh ground. Urdu versions of quite

1. It may well have been written earlier, for Sarshār speaks of translating it in his preface to Khudāī Faujdār (p.1), saying that he translated it "from several languages" whatever that may mean.

substantial selections appear quite early in the nineteenth century, and the British Museum has seven versions by different authors produced between 1836 and the date when Sarshār's was published. An account of these would not be relevant here, but it may be remarked in passing that the first full version was that of Toṭā Rām Shāyān, published by the Nawal Kishor Press, Lucknow, in 1868 under the title of Hazār Dāstān, and that the best was that of Mirzā Ḥairat, published from Delhi in 1892. Shāyān's is a remarkable piece of work - a re-writing, rather than a translation, of the original. It is written in a curious combination of verse and prose, and matches (and perhaps more than matches) the original for lascivious detail. Ḥairat's version too gives a total of 1,001 nights, and is excellently written in the pure Delhi colloquial, and with a lucidity which no earlier version can equal. However, Sarshār's version shows no signs of any debt to these. It was another version that influenced him greatly. This was that of the renowned Rajab 'Alī Beg Sarūr, the great master of the old, ornate prose style. His version, published in 1887 under the title of Shabistān i Sarūr is a re-telling of only a few of the Alif Laila tales, and runs to only 149 pages. According to Mas'ūd Ḥasan Rizvī,¹ the title is itself a chronogram, and gives the date of completion as 1279 A.H., which corresponds to 1862-3 A.D., only five years before Sarūr's death. Sarshār's airy claim

1. Introduction to his edition of Fasāna i 'Ibrat, p.6.

to have translated "from several languages" does not help us to identify his originals. He was competent enough both in English and in Persian to use versions in these languages, as well as the work of his predecessors in Urdu. But the influence of Sarūr is the only one that is clearly discernible - so clearly, in fact, that we are forced to conclude that some of Sarshār's passages are copied direct from Sarūr with only very minor changes. For example, Sarūr writes:

د فغنتہ نیند سے آنسو کھلی دلمیں خیال آیا
 آیت مار صورت دلدار دیوہ لینا پر ضرور ہو کہ ذکر
 سفر دور ہے - یہ سوچ کے وہ تنہا نیر کی جانب
 روانہ ہوا پیش دل کا بہا نہ ہوا - تم دروازے تیر
 کے بند ہو گئے تھے یا سبک بیدار ہونے والے سو
 گئے تھے نہ کسی کو یقینا رستہ تھا نہ اپنا اندھا رگر
 سکتا تھا مجبور ہو کر کھند نردبان سے محل میں
 میں آیا سب کو اپنے بخت فغنتہ یا یا جب
 سگد کے سر با لیں گزر ہوا عجیب ماجرا
 پیش نظر ہوا - آیت سرد سیاہ نام کر پیر
 سنظر غلام ہم آغوش ہے اور دنیادین
 فراغوش ہے

and Sarshār writes:

د معنہ آغوشہ کھنکھائی دل میں خیال آیا کہ
 رہی بیماری ملکہ کو دیکھو آنا جائے کیونکہ ابھی
 رات زیادہ ہے صبح کو آفر کوچ کرنا
 برنگاہ سوچ کے تنہا شہر کی طرف روانہ
 ہوا۔ طیش دل کا بہانہ ہوا تمام دروازے
 شہر پناہ کے بند ہو گئے تھے پاسبان
 بھی بخت فتنہ کی طرح سو گئے تھے
 نہ کسی کو پکار سکتا تھا نہ اپنا اظہار
 کر سکتا تھا کجیور سو کر بدستاری
 کند محل میں اثر آیا سکو اپنے نصیب
 کی طرح خواب غفلت میں پایا۔
 جب ملکہ کے سر بالیں نزر ہوا۔
 عجب ماجرا پیش نظر ہوا۔ ایک درد
 سیاہ فام کریمہ سے ہم آغوش
 ہے۔ - دین د دنیا فراموش ہے۔

In spite of similarities such as these, it would be unfair to accuse Sarshār of simply re-writing Shabistan i Sarūr. The prose styles are similar, but Sarshār's is

generally somewhat simpler and nearer to the spoken language. As the book progresses it becomes less cramped and formal, and often approaches that of Fasāna i Azād. For example on page 760 he writes:

انے گزر رنے سے بعد بڑی دیر تک
 عطر کی روح افزا خوشبو سے
 یہ معلوم ہوا کہ باغِ طبلہ و عطار
 بچے آیت تو یونہی اس گلزار
 سراپا بہا رکھو گلاب سے عنبر بار
 کی بوئے خوش نے طبلہ و عطار
 بنا رکھا تھا دوسرے عطر کی
 خوشبو نے اور نیوڑے گلاب نے
 اور بھی خوشبو دار کر دیا - دعا
 مانگنے لگا کہ یہاں اچھ سے یہ پیری مجھ
 تنہا اس روش میں آجائے

Unfortunately there is no uniformity of style. Sometimes it is simple, sometimes difficult and ornate; and in general it lacks the spontaneity of Fasāna i Azād, succumbing repeatedly to the influence of Sarūr.

Besides a measure of difference in prose style, there are other differences too. Characteristically, where Sarūr tells a direct narrative, Sarshār often tells the story

through dialogue. He quotes more freely than Sarūr from the Urdu and Persian poets. He also changes details in the stories. In the first story Sarshār's version of Shahrzād's marriage to the king differs from that of all other Urdu writers. He writes that Shahrzād wanted to marry the king to save the lives of other girls, while all the other writers have written that Shahrzād's father could not find any other girl to be the king's wife and that Shahrzād thereupon offered herself to save her father's life as well as the lives of other innocent girls. This change is perhaps prompted by Sarshār's attitudes towards women, already discussed. He is much more sympathetic towards them than the original Alif Laila and the earlier Urdu translators, and this is reflected throughout. He also changes the order of the stories which Sarūr and other writers followed. Thus, as the book proceeds, it emerges as something different from those of his predecessors.

The publisher, in an announcement that appears at the end of volume two, states that these two volumes omit such famous tales as Aladdin, Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, and Sinbad the Sailor, but that other volumes are to follow. However, there is no evidence that this intention was ever realised, and as far as we know, Sarshār did not turn his hand to translation again.

The general conclusion must be that while his translations are interesting to the student of his work, they add little or nothing to his literary stature.

CONCLUSION

When we review the course of Sarshār's development as a writer we see at once that the key period extends from 1878 to 1890. In the course of these twelve years he progresses from the stage of Fasāna i Azād, a stage in which, though closely tied to the old tradition he is grafting onto it the new modes of writing which characterise the modern novel, to the stage where, in Jām i Sarshār and Sair i Kohsār he has all but severed his ties with the old and practically completed a transition to the new. After that the trend is ^{er} revised, and already in Kāminī he is in many respects back behind the starting point which Fasāna i Azād had represented.

At first sight it might have been expected that other writers, if not Sarshār himself, would subsequently have continued the advance from the point which he had reached; but, in general, this has not happened. Ruswā's Umrāo Jān Adā, first published in 1899 - only nine years after Sair i Kohsār - does indeed fulfil the requirements of the modern novel completely, but this is an isolated achievement even among Ruswā's own works, and has remained so ever since in Urdu prose narrative as a whole. Moreover there is no sign in Ruswā's writings that he was in any way influenced by Sarshār. In one passage where he compares and contrasts his own theory of the novel with those of other Urdu writers,¹

1. Preface to his novel Zāt i Sharīf, Lucknow, 1921.

there are plain references to Nazīr Aḥmad and to 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar; but there is no reference whatever to Sarshār. To discuss the reasons for this would be beyond the scope of the present study. Perhaps it is in part due to the spread of English education since the end of the nineteenth century, so that educated Urdu-speakers whose tastes demanded realistic writing turned increasingly to English novels, and European novels available in English translations to satisfy their artistic needs, leaving the Urdu novelist in the position where he must address himself to a less highly-educated, less sophisticated audience of more traditional tastes. At all events it is strikingly evident that if the Urdu novel has greatly extended its range of subject matter since Sarshār's day, it is still a form of literature in which, in one and the same work, traditional and modern elements exist side by side. Indeed, the greatest Urdu (and Hindi) novelist of the present century, Prem Chand, is a true heir of Sarshār. His works have the same strong moralising tendency, the same weaknesses and imperfections of plot of construction, and the same vivid realistic writing mingling with unlikely incident and implausible characterisation. The time must perhaps come when we shall cease to demand of the Urdu novel that it conform to standards evolved by the European prose narrative in the course of its development, and to belittle its worth because it does not, and shall instead be content

to appreciate it as it is, and study its achievements rather than its shortcomings. When this attitude becomes more general Sarshār's status in the history of the Urdu novel will be ~~not~~ significantly enhanced.

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