

LITERATURE IN PERSIAN AND OTHER INDO - IRANIAN LANGUAGES

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Part One

LITERATURE IN PERSIAN

(H. Javadi)

In the nineteenth century Iran suddenly found itself the focus of ever-growing attention and rivalry on the part of Britain, France and Russia. This was a prelude to further relations with Europe, which included sending the first group of students to England in 1806 and establishing the first printing house in Tabriz in 1816–17. It was at the initiative of the reform-minded crown prince ‘Abbas Mirza that Mirza Saleh Kazeruni was sent to England to learn the art of printing. ‘Abbas Mirza also sent his men to St Petersburg to be trained in the art of lithography. The first printing business was started in Tabriz in 1824–5, to be followed by another one in Tehran in 1837–8. Apart from the advent of printing, two other events speeded up the process of enlightenment. One was the publication of the first newspaper and the other was the foundation of the *Dār al-Fonūn* (Polytechnic) in 1852 by Amir Kabir, the reformist prime minister of Naser al-Din Shah (1848–96).

Although a two-page account of current events appeared for a short time in 1839 through the efforts of the same Mirza Saleh, it was not until 1851 that a more regular government paper (*Rūznāmeḥ-ye vaqāye‘ ettefāqiyeh*) was established by order of Naser al-Din Shah in order ‘to raise the awareness of the people of Iran, and inform them of domestic and foreign news’. However, in the early stages the newspapers were exclusively government papers. Furthermore, a censor’s office was established in 1864 in order to control the papers that were published abroad. The importance of newspapers published in Persian outside Iran and smuggled illegally into the country cannot be overemphasized.¹

The foundation of the *Dār al-Fonūn* in 1852 encouraged the spread of European influence and spawned a number of translations from European languages. Initially the European teachers at this educational institution, with the help of their Iranian students, published handbooks in Persian, which laid the foundations of a modern Persian prose in

¹ *Akhtar* (published in Istanbul, 1875–97), *Qānūn* (London, 1892–3), *Habl al-matin* (Calcutta, 1891–2), *Sorayā* (Cairo) and *Ershād* (Baku) all had a far-reaching impact on their Iranian readers.

science and technology. Literary works were mostly translated from the French: one of the first was *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Isfahan* by James Morier in the beautiful prose of Mirza Habib of Isfahan (put to death in 1897). Morier imitated the Persian prose style and pretended that the book was the memoirs of an Isfahani friend who had fallen ill in Tucat, Turkey, and died there. Mirza Habib was so successful in rendering it in Persian that for many years Iranians thought the book was the work of one of their compatriots. *The Adventures of Hajji Baba*, along with translations of novels by Dumas *père*, Fénelon, Daniel Defoe, Jules Verne, Lesage and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, laid the foundations of the Persian novel and short story, which appeared in the early twentieth century.

Under the influence of Ahmed Vafiq, who had translated and published Molière's *Le Misanthrope* in Istanbul in 1869, Mirza Habib produced his own Persian adaptation under the title, *Gozāresh-e mardom goriz* [Adventures of a Misanthrope]. In spite of being an excellent translation, it went unnoticed and it was not until 1874, when Mirza Ja'far Qarajehdaghi translated the Azerbaijani comedies of Fath 'Ali Akhundzadeh (originally written between 1850 and 1856), that drama in its modern form was effectively introduced to the Persian literary scene.

Neoclassicism (the *Bazgasht* school)

In the field of poetry, this period saw the continuation of the *Bazgasht* (neoclassical) school, which advocated a return to the classical masters of Persian poetry. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a group of poets including Neshat of Isfahan and Saba of Kashan came to the conclusion that the only way to revive Persian poetry from the decadence of the late Safavid and Afsharid periods was to return to the style of great masters such as Ferdowsi, Farrokhi, Manuchehri, Sa'di and Hafez. As Nima Yushij, the founder of modern Persian poetry (see below), puts it, 'This was a return to the old style out of desperation.'² This group tried to imitate the old masters in every respect. Saba of Kashan wrote a *Shāhanshāh-nāme* in praise of Fath 'Ali Shah (1796–1834), imitating Ferdowsi's *Shāh-nāme*; and Qa'ani, Soroush and Mijmar tried to excel in following Manuchehri and Farrokhi in *qasideh* (*qasida*, ode) writing and Hafez or Sa'di in *ghazals* (lyric poems). In short, it was a court poetry that often failed to take account of the realities of ordinary life. Even satirical poets such as Yaghma of Jandaq, who to some extent portrayed everyday life in his poetry, tended to be more of a panegyrist than a satirist.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the same trend continued. The *Bazgasht* movement had many followers and the courtly poetry that had blossomed anew in the

² Yushij, 1972, pp. 50–1.

reign of Fath 'Ali Shah continued to dominate the scene. Foroughi of Bastam (1798–1857), Shahab of Isfahan, Qa'ani of Shiraz (1808–53/4), Soroush of Isfahan (1813–68/9) and Mahmud Khan of Kashan (d. 1893), the poet laureate, were among the most well-known poets during the reigns of Fath 'Ali Shah and Naser al-Din Shah. Foroughi and Shahab excelled in writing panegyrics and the former was particularly known for his beautiful *ghazals* in the style of Hafez and Sa'di. Soroush translated and versified the Arabic poetry of the text of the *One Thousand and One Nights* for a Persian version, which was prepared by 'Abdol-Latif Tasuji. Whenever there was a suitable version by one of the great masters, Soroush chose this instead of the Arabic original, but very often he did the versification himself. The result was an incredible literary work in both prose and poetry.

A contemporary of Soroush was Habibollah Qa'ani, who in spite of his short life became one of the most outstanding poets of nineteenth-century Iran. He was the first Persian poet to be acquainted with European languages, especially French, from which he translated a book on botany. However, acquaintance with the West did not have a profound influence on his work, and he remained a master of traditional poetry. Though he excelled in lyrical poetry, his greatest talent lay in writing strophes (*mosammat*) in the tradition of Manuchehri. In his prose more than his poetry he tried to depict the realities of everyday life, especially in *Ketāb-e parishān [Pêl-e-Mêl]*, which was in imitation of the *Golestān* of Sa'di.

Another outstanding poet of the early nineteenth century was Abol-Hasan Yaghma (1782–1857), who came from humble origins in the desert town of Biyabanak and had a turbulent life including nearly six years spent in prison. He was well known for his extraordinarily beautiful *ghazals*, as well as for his biting satires in which his language became obscene and even coarse. Although sometimes his satire borders on invective, it is social malaise and especially religious hypocrisy that he is criticizing in his best-known satirical works.

One of the younger generation of the neoclassical poets, who distinguished himself from the others by being bold enough to translate his experiences into poetry and a criticism of Iranian society, was Abu Nasr Fathollah Khan Sheybani (1830–91). After trying in vain to recover his inherited properties, he came to the conclusion that 'justice in Iran is dormant' and turned to Sufism for consolation. He is considered as one of the early poets, who brings social problems into his work and heralds the coming of a new era in poetry. Throughout his works there is a pessimistic tone, exposing the abuse of the law by a corrupt officialdom in an absolutist society. However, he does not criticize the shah but rather looks to him to bring about reforms.

Very different to Sheybani was Mohammad Taqi Shurideh of Shiraz (1863/4–1926), who in spite of becoming blind at the age of 7 as a result of smallpox, was full of energy and optimism. He was a traditional poet in *ghazal* and *qasideh* and wrote many works of textual criticism on Nizami, Sa‘di and Farrokhi. His *Nāme-ye roshandelān* [Book of the Clear-Minded] was characteristically written as a consolation for the blind.

Mirza Javad Adib Neyshapuri (b. 1864) and Mirza Sadeq Adib al- Mamalek Farahani (1860–1917) were among the last representatives of the neoclassical school of poetry to bring modern ideas into Persian poetry. Farahani had a more marked interest in politics and became one of the foremost advocates of the constitution and enlightenment.

The dawn of enlightenment: the pre-constitutional period

Before turning to the poetry of the constitutional period, mention should be made of a number of critical pamphlets or books written by the enlightened group of Persian intellectuals, functionaries and courtiers. The ever-deteriorating socioeconomic conditions of the population in the mid-nineteenth century, the rivalry between Russia and Britain over control of Iran, and the religious *Bābi* movement that stirred up riots, particularly among the poor, alarmed the ruling class and prompted them to think of some kind of reform to prevent the fall of the dynasty. Many intellectuals advocated the study of Western science and technology, while they saw the main source of evil as the absolute power of the shah. However, their fear of the regime led them to make excuses for the shah and to lay the blame for all his inadequacies on his advisers. On account of their criticism, their works were frequently published posthumously outside Iran.

Majd al-Molk (d. 1881), whose tours of duty had taken him to the Russian and Ottoman empires, in his *Resāle-ye Majdieh* (published in Tehran in 1946), argued that the shah himself was interested in education and reforms, but was surrounded by a crowd of sycophants who had nothing but their own interests in mind. The clergy, especially those who preached to the people, were afraid of a change in the *status quo* and losing their grip over the populace. One of the pupils of the *Dār al-Fonūn*, E‘temad al-Saltane (1843–95), who was the author of many books including two on the ancient history of Iran and served as a minister of printing (*entebā‘āt*), produced a literary work entitled the *Khalseh* or *Khāb-nāme* [Book of Dreams], which was posthumously published as *A Description of the Decline of Iran*. In a dream he brings to justice the past prime ministers of the Qajar kings and reveals the miserable and corrupt condition of the court, a criticism that could well be applied to the court of Naser al-Din Shah.

Malkom Khan Nazem al-Dowle (1827–1907), originally an Armenian from the district of Julfa in Isfahan, who became an adviser to Naser al-Din Shah, managed to secure some business concessions in Iran but was not on good terms with the monarch. He wrote a series of political pamphlets, which were intended for circulation among the elites, but were soon secretly circulated throughout Iran. In works such as *Rafiq va vazir* [Friend and Vizier], *Osūl-e mazhab-e divānyān* [Principles of Officialdom], *Osūl-e taraqqi* [Principles of Progress] and many others he described how Iran could be saved and reforms implemented. According to Yahya Arianpour, who has written one of the best accounts of Persian literature over the past 150 years, Malkom was:

an ambitious, brave, learned and intelligent man, who despite his love of money was deeply patriotic. Despite criticisms directed against him, it cannot be denied that he played an important role in the awakening of the Persians.³

Another reformer and brilliant writer was Mirza Agha Khan of Kirman, who was beheaded in Tabriz in 1896 for having links with the assassin of Naser al-Din Shah. In his works such as *Sālār-nāme*, *Sad mas'aleh* [One Hundred Problems] and *Rezvān* [Paradise], he (like Malkom), humorously and sometimes with biting satire, criticizes the corruption and gives a vivid picture of a society suffering under a despotic ruler.

A younger contemporary of Mirza Agha Khan was Haji Zeyn al-'Abedin of Maragheh (1839–1912), whose imaginary travelogue (*Siyāhat-nāme-ye Ebrāhim Beik*) became one of the most influential works of the constitutional period. He was a prosperous merchant who spent some time as Iranian vice-consul in Kutasi in Georgia, but later because of his ill-treatment at the hands of an Iranian official, he took Russian citizenship. Being a patriot, he then decided to regain his Persian citizenship and after achieving this in Istanbul in 1902, Haji Zeyn al-'Abedin returned to Iran. He found a 'land wrapped in ignorance and superstition and devastated by despotism and corruption'. His *Siyāhat-nāme* [Book of Travels] is a bitter satire on the Government of Iran and the social conditions of the country; depicted with sobering realism, its object was to awaken Iranians to the deplorable conditions and to bring about reform.

The constitutional period: the outburst of social and political literature

The constitutional revolution of 1905–11 and the turbulent years following it changed the course of Persian literature. While classical poetry in the form of panegyrics had been written at the Qajar court, it was poetry with political content and social and political satire that

³ Arianpour, 1971, Vol. 1, pp. 391.

dominated the scene. Although the old poetic forms such as the *masnawi* (poem in couplets), *ghazal*, *qasideh*, etc. were still used, the content was didactic, topical and political. The press played an important role in popularizing poetry. Many writers and poets who had depended for their living upon various patrons were no longer compelled to write panegyrics for the king and emirs. Ordinary people had now become their patrons. Poetry, with its deep roots in Persian culture, along with journalism had become an effective medium for satire and political discussion.

Two types of new poets had emerged: publicists who expressed their ideologies in the form of poetry, and another type who composed patriotic *ghazals* in the form of *tasnifs* (songs). The poet had become someone deeply committed to the political and social welfare of the people. E. G. Browne, who for the first time collected the poetry and writings of the constitutional period in his *Press and Poetry of Modern Persia*, stresses this point when he says: 'If one collects the poems written since the beginning of the Persian revolution, it will be a poetic history of the movement.'⁴

'Abol-Qasim 'Aref Qazvini (1882–1934) was one of the first poets of the revolution. He came from a traditional clerical family, and his father on account of his good voice wanted to make him a *rowzeh-khān* (reciter of the sufferings of Imam Hoseyn and his family). Though at first he associated with court circles, Qazvini soon left them and went over to the supporters of the revolution in which he found a meaning and a purpose for his poetry. He sang his political *ghazals* at gatherings that were attended by thousands of people. During the First World War, along with other liberals, he emigrated to Istanbul, where he remained until 1919. After returning to Iran, he joined the movement of Colonel Mohammad Taqi Khan Pesiyan, and in his poems incited people to march on Tehran. After the tragic death of Mohammad Taqi Khan, 'Aref Qazvini continued his public concerts with even greater success than before.

Mohammad Taqi Bahar, better known as Malek al-Sho'ara Bahar (1880–1951), started as a classical poet in Mashhad but soon joined the cause of the revolution to become one of its most eloquent advocates. After serving several times as a member of parliament and spending some time in prison, Bahar chose an academic career and became one of the most distinguished scholars of his time. Although traditional in style, the content of his poetry was closely associated with contemporary events. He depicted Mohammad 'Ali Shah (1907–9) and his court in humorous and satirical verses. During the rule of Reza Shah (1925–41), when censorship forbade all criticism of the king, Bahar managed to write satires in the most ingenious and covert manner.⁵ According to Jan Rypka, Bahar covered

⁴ Browne, 1914, p. 3 (Persian introduction). See also Javadi, 1985, pp. 136 et seq.

⁵ See Javadi, 1985, pp. 180–1, for the translation of one of his ingeniously written pieces of satire.

a wide variety of subjects in his poetry and ‘achieved a homogeneous personal poetic style, intended for a wide public. His poetry was explicitly didactic in aim but without being dry and pedantic.’⁶

Mention should be made of three revolutionary poets, Abo’l-Qasim Lahuti (1887–1957), Mirzadeh-ye ‘Eshqi (1894–1924) and Mohammad Farrokhi of Yazd (1889–1939), who all had different fates. A fervent socialist and revolutionary, Lahuti was forced in 1918 to flee to Istanbul, where he published the literary journal *Pārs* in 1921. One year after his return to Iran and after an unsuccessful uprising in Tabriz, he fled to the Soviet Union. There he lived for the rest of his life, later becoming the leading poet of Soviet Tajikistan. His large two-volume *Divān* (Moscow, 1946) comprises many lyrical and epic poems in both classical and modern forms. More than form, Lahuti was concerned with the political message of his poetry and the ‘awakening of the masses’.

‘Eshqi, a sincere and devoted patriot, became disillusioned when the republican cause was lost when Reza Khan became the monarch. He had published vehement attacks against the Anglo-Persian agreement of 1919 and the corruption of the Qajar court in his famous journal *Qarn-e bistom* [Twentieth Century]. After publishing a caricature and a satire against Reza Khan, he was assassinated by government agents.

Farrokhi did not fare much better. At the age of 15 his mouth was literally sewn up for writing a poem in praise of democracy. After escaping from prison in 1910, he reached Tehran and joined the revolutionaries and wrote many *ghazals* on social and political topics, even paying tribute to the October revolution in Russia. He became a member of the *Majles* (parliament) in 1930–1, but being an open supporter of socialist views, was obliged to emigrate to Berlin. The government of Reza Shah enticed him to return, whereupon he was imprisoned. He died in prison two years before the abdication of Reza Shah and the release of all political prisoners.

Iraj Mirza Jalal al-Mamalek (1874–1926) was a Qajar prince, who unlike most of his contemporaries was not much affected by the revolutionary spirit of the tumultuous times in which he lived. However, he should be mentioned as an advocate of greater social justice for women in Iran. In humorous and sometimes erotic terms, he describes the situation in which women are brainwashed to keep their veil. In his *Hejāb-nāme* [Book of the Veil], which enjoyed wide popularity, he encourages women to discard the veil. His satire extends to other social and political questions in his *‘Āref-nāme* [Book of ‘Aref], a bitter satire on the poet ‘Aref Qazvini and some other contemporary poets, whom Iraj Mirza pictures as political opportunists. Iraj Mirza also tried his hand very successfully at the translation of

⁶ Rypka, 1968, p. 373.

some fables by La Fontaine and an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* that he called *Zohreh va Manuchehr*.

Poetry and journalism went hand in hand in this period, and two poets deserve a brief mention as they represent a new style in satirical Persian poetry. Seyyed Ashraf al-Din Gilani (1871–1934), better known as Nasim-i Shomal because of the journal that he published for many years under this name, was popular on account of his ready wit, beautifully written *tasnifs* and satirical verse in which he used colloquial expressions. It was under the influence of the famous Azerbaijani journal *Mollā Nasroddin*, which had a tremendous impact not only on the Iranian press but on the constitutional movement as a whole, that he began writing political satire. In fact, most of the time he freely translated the biting and exceedingly humorous works of the great Azerbaijani poet Taherzadeh Sabir (1862–1911).

‘Ali Akbar Dehkhoda (1879–1956), who later became the author of the first encyclopaedic dictionary in Persian (*Lughat-nāme*), began his famous satirical essays (*Charand parand*) in the journal *Sur esrāfil* (1907). In his crisp and sharp satirical style, he laid the foundations of modern Persian prose. In some of his poems such as *Morgh-e sahar* [The Morning Bird], written in memoriam of his friend and the editor of *Sur esrāfil*, Mirza Jahangir Khan, he reaches new heights, both stylistically and in expressing his heartfelt sentiments. In his satirical verse he makes great use of colloquial language, which was new in Persian literature.

The reign of Reza Shah and the beginnings of modern poetry

The nearly 20 years of Reza Shah's rule, from his rise to power in 1925 to his forced abdication in 1941, was a fairly uneventful period in Persian literature, except for the appearance of early examples of free verse. Following the example of Atatürk in Turkey, Reza Shah embarked on a general modernization of his country. He himself became a driving force in launching the country into the modern age of reforms. On the other hand, Reza Shah's dictatorial and ruthless rule stifled all vestiges of the dearly won freedom of expression and democracy. The politically motivated poetry, satire and journalism that were found in the works of ‘Eshqi, Gilani, Farrokhi, Qazvini, Lahuti and Iraj Mirza disappeared and freedom of expression declined sharply. Poets either devoted themselves to meditative and philosophical subjects, or they referred to social grievances in vague and allegorical ways. Political verse satire, which had been such an outstanding feature of an earlier age, became something of the past, and only criticism of a very general nature was tolerated. Before the end of Reza Shah's reign, of the six above-mentioned poets, ‘Eshqi was assassinated,

Farrokhi perished in prison, Lahuti fled to Russia, Gilani died in a lunatic asylum, where he was forcibly confined, and the other two died of natural causes.

Bahar and Parvin E‘tesami (1910–41) are the most outstanding classical poets of this period. Parvin E‘tesami, the daughter of the well-known journalist and poet Yosuf E‘tesami, had a modern education at the American Girls’ College in Tehran and was well trained in classical poetry. Although almost untouched by the turbulent years of the early twentieth century in Iran and their politics, she was one of the country’s most talented and influential poetesses. Imitating the art and the languages of the great masters, she wrote *ghazals*, *qasidehs* and poetical dialogues (*munāziras*) in the classical style but with the philosophical and moral themes of modern times. Parvin ‘Etesami had a great sympathy for the misery and suffering of the poor and also for the plight of women. According to Rypka, though her themes and subject-matter were extremely novel:

She hardly grazed the surface of the really urgent problems, even in the poems of social themes. She did not attempt to find a solution or to penetrate deeply into the social context, but lapsed into sentimental and affected melancholy.⁷

Had she lived longer, she would surely have reached greater heights in Persian poetry.

Mohammad Hoseyn Shahryar (1905–87) and Rahi Mo‘ayyeri (1910–69) were the most famous traditional poets of recent times. While the latter was mostly known for his *ghazals* (*Sāyeh-e ‘omr* [Shadow of Life], 1954), the former wrote in a variety of traditional forms and even tried his hand at free verse. He practised the same eclecticism in his political life, easily abandoning the Pahlavis to sing the praises of the Islamic revolution. His *Vāy Mādaram* [O My Mother] and *Payām be Einstein* [A Message to Einstein] are two excellent examples of his blank verse. In lyrical poetry, Shahryar’s *ghazals* are in the style of Sa‘di and Hafez.

Shahryar broke new ground by writing poetry in his native Azerbaijani Turkish, which was frowned upon under the Pahlavi regime. His famous *Hayder Babaye salam* (1954; part II, 1963) was responsible for breaking the literary isolation of Azerbaijani Turkish in Iran. Through graphic imagery and in a beautifully simple language, the poet recalls his carefree childhood, growing up in a village near Tabriz overshadowed by the Hayder Baba mountain. All the manners, customs and local traditions of the villagers are described in the stanzaic and syllabic pattern of the traditional bards (*‘āshiqs*).

⁷ Rypka, 1968, p. 387.

Breaking traditions: new poetry (*she'r-e now*)

While the formal and traditional type of poetry continued in Persian, from the second decade of the twentieth century there were poets who experimented with modern poetry and blank verse. Shams Kasmai, Taqi Ra'fat and Ja'far Khamene'i, some under French and others under Turkish literary influence, tried their hand at new forms and styles. It was Mohammad Esfandiyari (1897–1959), better known as Nima Yushij, who changed the course of Persian poetry. He lived a modest and simple life between his native village in the mountains of Mazandaran and Tehran and never travelled abroad. He knew French and the influence of the French Impressionists was instrumental for him. He decided to put Persian poetry on a new route. In the manifesto of his 'poetic ideology', which he postulated for the first time at the first Congress of Persian Writers in 1946, he announced his departure from the old classical prosody ('*aruz*') and his adoption of a new style (*she'r-e āzād*, 'free verse') that had not been used before.

Nima believed that the imaginative essence of the poem should dictate its form. He says that he has not completely rejected the old prosody, but rather he has enlarged it by adding to it 'the natural declamation of human speech with the rules of prosody'. He adds:

In my verse the rhythm and rhyme are valued differently. The length and brevity of my verse [*mesra'-hā*] are not chosen capriciously. In irregularity itself I recognize regularity. Each one of my words succeeds the other in a well-thought-out and strict fashion. For me, writing free verse is more labour-intensive.⁸

In short, for Nima the essence of poetry did not consist only in the symmetry of the structure of the verse, in the rhythm and rhyme, but in the harmony and acoustic influence of the word. He stressed that Persian poetry, both in content and in form, should undergo a radical change. The narrative and descriptive method in poetry should be pertinent to the life and understanding of people in the modern world.

Nima's early poetry was in the classical style and his famous *Āy shab* [O Night] is a beautiful *tarji'-band* in the style of Sa'di. In his long lyrical poem *Afsāneh* (1922), which is very much under the influence of the French Romantics, he deviates slightly from the usual classical pattern. In spite of bitter criticism from the traditionalists, Nima continued his work. The really radical departure came with his poem *Qognus* [Phoenix] in 1937, to be followed by many other poems such as *Khāb-e zemestāni* [The Winter Sleep], *Āy ādam-hā* [O People], and *Morgh-e amin* [Faithful Bird].

Nima's path was followed by a group of younger-generation poets, the most important of whom are mentioned below. Mehdi Akhavan Sales (1928–90), whose pen-name

⁸ Quoted by Makhaleski, 1961, p. 162.

was 'Omid', began his career as a classical poet and only later turned to free verse. Nima pioneered the way and Akhavan offered excellent examples of the new style. His early collections⁹ are mostly in the classical style with some beautiful examples of blank verse. The title-poem of the collection *Winter* is a case in point. Depicting the dictatorial atmosphere of Mohammad Reza Shah's reign, where people are so scared and wrapped up in themselves that they do not want to answer your greetings, it became one of the most outstanding poetical protests of the period. In Akhavan's poetry, the symbolism of words gains a new dimension and they are also chosen for their relation with the contents of the poem. (Indeed, they are so well chosen that almost no other words could be substituted for them.)

Another major poet who defied the conventional restrictions of classical poetry in favour of free-flowing verse and displayed his love of democracy and political freedom, both under the shah and under the Islamic regime, was Ahmad Shamlu (1925–2000). On account of his works and translations, Shamlu was arrested and spent 14 months in jail; he was released in 1955. His first collection of poetry was published in 1947, but his first great masterpiece came in 1957: it was *Havā-ye tāzeh* [Fresh Air], which would have a profound impact on modern Persian poetry.¹⁰ Ayda, the poet's second wife, was the source of inspiration for his superb lyrical poems, which sometimes remind one of the *Song of Songs* that he himself rendered beautifully into Persian. In the words of Shamlu:

I, an Iranian poet, first learned about poetry from the Spanish Lorca, the French Eluard, the German Rilke, the Russian Pasternak and the American Langston Hughes; and only later, with this education, I turned to the poets of my mother-tongue to see and know, say, the grandeur of Hafez from a fresh perspective.¹¹

The poet and painter, Sohrab Sepehri (1928–80), was an exception among Nima's many followers. While for many he remained the model of a real artist, many others criticized him for being isolated in his ivory tower and unaware of the social and political struggles of his time. Far from the hue and cry of intellectuals, he pursued his sublime and somewhat mystical goals in a surrealistic and very sincere poetry replete with lively imagery. Being profoundly influenced by oriental schools of philosophy and religions in his travels to Japan and India, Sepehri was a poet of nature who combined his art of painting with his lively

⁹ *Arghnun* [Judas Tree] (1951), *Zemestān* [Winter] (1954), *Ākhar-e Shāhnāme* [End of the *Shahname*] (1959) and *Az in Avestā* [From this *Avesta*] (1965).

¹⁰ His other collections include *Bāgh-e āyeneh* [Garden of Mirror] (1960), *Ayda dar āyeneh* [Ayda in the Mirror] (1964), *Lahzeh-hā va hamisheh* [Moments and Ever] (1964), *Ayda, derakht va khanjar* [Ayda, Tree and Dagger] (1965), etc.

¹¹ Hakkak, 1984a, pp. 221–2.

and melodious poetry.¹² His one-volume collected poetic works, published as *Hasht ketāb* [Eight Books] in 1967, became exceedingly popular after his death.

A close friend of Sepehri was Forugh Farrokhzad (1935–67), who in her short life had an incredible impact on modern Persian literature. After briefly being married to her cousin at the age of 16 and having a son, Farrokhzad relinquished her son to her ex-husband to pursue her calling as a poet and an independent lifestyle. She published three collections of poetry, *Asir* [Captive], *Esiyān* [Revolt] and *Divār* [The Wall], in the classical style from 1955 to 1958. She produced a prize-winning film, *Khāneh siyāh ast* [The House is Black], about a lepers' colony in Tabriz in 1962. With the publication in 1964 of her fourth collection, *Tavallod-e digar* [Another Birth], Forugh Farrokhzad became a major figure in modern Persian poetry. A unique and talented poetess in her own right, she is particularly distinguished as a woman who despite social restraints and taboos dared to express her innermost feelings about love, sex, society and the self with an openness and frankness unprecedented in the history of Persian literature. In the four collections of poetry that Farrokhzad published before her tragic and untimely death at the age of 32, one can trace the development of her style and thought from the personal and often introspective scope of her earlier poems. In her later collections she attains a broader social vision and an often transcendental view *vis-à-vis* universal questions of life and death, decay and birth. Her fifth collection of poetry came out posthumously in 1965 as *Imān biyāvarim beh āghāz-e fasl-e sard* [Let Us Believe in the Coming of a Cold Season].

Another remarkable poetess of our times is Simin Behbahani (b. 1927), who has established herself as one of the most outstanding figures in the contemporary Iranian poetic scene. Behbahani and Farrokhzad reached poetic fame at almost the same time, but their style is different. Behbahani mostly concentrates on the *ghazal*, and avoiding the daring departure of Nima-style poetry, looks for a middle ground. In her second collection of poetry, *Chelcherāgh* [Chandelier] (1957), she is already moving from the quatrain (*chāharpāreh*) to a new style of *ghazal*, which is akin to the traditional style but with a social and political content.¹³ While not a militant feminist like Farrokhzad, Behbahani cannot reconcile herself with the values dictated by a society ruled by men. Though her poetry abounds in themes of politics and struggle, she cannot be called a revolutionary poet.

¹² His first collections of poems included *Marg-e rang* [Death of Colour] (1951), *Zendegi-ye khāb-hā* [Life of Dreams] (1953), *Āvār-e āftāb* [Collapse of the Sun] (1961) and *Sharq-e andūh* [East of Sorrow] (1961). Other collections of his gentle and meditative poetry were published as *Hajm-e sabz* [Green Dimension], *Mosāfer* [Passenger] and *Sedā-ye pāy-e āb* [Sound of the Footsteps of the Water] in 1957.

¹³ Her other collections include *Marmar* [Marble] (1963), *Rastākhiz* [Resurrection] (1971), *Yek daricheh āzādi* [A Window for Freedom] (1995), etc.

Of the second generation of Nima's followers, Nader Naderpur (1929–81) and Fereyduun Moshiri (1927–2000) distinguished themselves by their poetic genius and by perfecting the style of free verse. In collections like *Sh'er-e angūr* [Poem of Grape] (1954) or *Dokhtar-e jām* [Daughter of Wine] (1954), Naderpur's poetry is rich in imagery and deeply embedded in the texture of the Persian language. After the Islamic revolution, Naderpur in Los Angeles and Esma'il Kho'i (b. 1938) in London became the most outspoken poets of protest against the new regime. Reflections about life and death, love and destiny as well as human suffering have been some of the themes of Moshiri's poems in collections such as *Bahār rā bāvar kon* [Believe the Spring] (1968) and *Āh bārān* [Oh, Rain] (1982). Still from the younger generation of poets, Mohammad Reza Shafi'-e Kadkani (b. 1939), a well-known scholar of Persian literature, with a deep knowledge of Persian and Arabic poetry, displays an extraordinarily sensitive lyricism and great musicality in his poetry.

While following the ideas of Nima on rhyme and rhythm, the younger generation of poets laid more emphasis on the social function of poetry (such as M.A. Sepanlou in *Khānom-e zamān*, Tehran, 1987). As the political establishment often stood directly in opposition to the humanistic and social concerns of the poets, they tried to express their message in a vague and symbolic fashion. A school known as the 'Poetry of Resistance' included many poets of the younger generations,¹⁴ some of whom expressed their ideas openly while others did so more covertly. Another group known as the 'New Wave Poets' refused to turn poetry into a means of revolutionary or social action. After the Islamic revolution, for a short while there was a tendency to write in more traditional style and forms. More avant-garde types of modern poetry were associated with too much Westernization and were not favoured. Nationalistic, mystical and devotional themes were used by those poets who remained in the Islamic Republic of Iran (hereafter Iran). Those who had left the country after the revolution mostly continued their poetry of protest and social concern.

Fiction in modern Persian literature

Translations of European novels and works such as Maraghe'i's *Sayāhat-nāme* with their realistic prose had paved the way for the rise of some early historical novels. One of the first novelists who mostly wrote on historical subjects with an eye on didactic themes was Sana'atzadeh Kermani. His first novel, *Dām-gostarān yā enteqām-khāhān-e Mazdak* [The Plotters or the Avengers of Mazdak], depicts the intrigue-ridden court of the last Sasanian king, which was on the verge of collapse under pressure from the invading Arabs. Among

¹⁴ Such as Maftun Amini (b. 1925), Siyavosh Kasrai (1925–2003), Ahmad Reza Ahmadi (b. 1940), Esma'il Kho'i, Khosrow Golsorkhi (1941–74) and Shafi'-e Kadkani (b. 1939).

his other novels are *Dastān-e Māni-ye naqqāsh* [The Story of Mani the Painter] and *Siyāh-pushān* [Men in Black Robes]. The former deals with the romantic life of Mani, the famous prophet and painter, and the latter with the life of Abu Muslim, the Persian general who led the struggle of the Persian element within the Arab empire.

Another novelist was Mirza Mohammad Baqer Khosravi, who, like many other intellectuals of his time, joined the constitutional movement. During the struggle with the forces of Mohammad 'Ali Shah, Khosravi retired to his native Kermanshah. The most outstanding among his novels is a trilogy entitled *Shams va toghrā* [Sun and Sign], *Māri-ye Venizi* [Mary of Venice] and *Toghrol va Homā*, which takes place in the time of the Ilkhans Abaqa Khan and Ahmad Takudar. In essence, they are three romantic novels in which historical details are not treated convincingly.

Mohammad 'Ali Jamalzadeh's (1881–1997) *Yeki būd yeki nabūd* [Once Upon a Time] (1921), published by the journal *Kāveh* in Berlin, was a landmark not only in the Persian short story but in Persian fiction as well. Apart from employing the techniques of the modern short story in this collection, in his interesting introduction to the volume, Jamalzadeh vehemently criticizes the traditionalists in Persian literature who write for the learned few and ignore the general public by using unrealistic and florid language. Earlier Dehkhoda, in his satirical essays *Charand parand*, had made very effective use of colloquial and expressive language, but Jamalzadeh in his short stories goes one step further. Though contemporary with other writers such as Jahangir Jalili (1909–38), Mohammad Mas'ud (assassinated in 1947), 'Ali Dashti (1896–1981) and Mohammad Hejazi (1899–1973), Jamalzadeh is considered as the father of Persian fiction. He advocated a simplification of the literary language and invited writers to use a style that was closer to colloquial speech. He used idioms and expressions of everyday life and opened a new chapter in Persian prose. It was in the works of Sadeq Hedayat that the new style reached perfection and became a model for the younger generations of Persian writers.

Sadeq Hedayat (1903–51) is perhaps the most well-known Iranian novelist. After being educated in Europe, he returned to Tehran in 1930 and published a series of brilliant short stories: *Zنده beh gūr* [Buried Alive] (1930), *Seh qatreh khūn* [Three Drops of Blood] (1932), *Vagh Vagh sāhāb* [Mr Bow-Wow] (1933), *Sag-e velgārd* [The Stray Dog] (1933), and a longer story called *Allaviyeh khānom* (1979). In all these works, Hedayat describes, with remarkable sensitivity, insight and understanding, the lives, aspirations, anxieties and sorrows of his characters. His most famous and controversial novel is *Būf-e kūr* [The Blind Owl] (1937), which has been translated into English; its bleak and Kafkaesque world is very different from the atmosphere of his other works of fiction. Among Hedayat's satirical works of fiction are *Tup-e morvārid* (1947) and *Hāji āghā* (1945). The former is a bitter

satire on the dictatorial rule of Reza Shah and the beliefs and practices of Islam. The latter is a satire on the life of a hypocritical miser who, chameleon-like, changes his political ideologies in order to suit the occasion. *Hāji āghā* was apparently inspired by *Marg-e sūdkhōr* [Death of the Usurer] (1937) by the great Tajik writer Sadriddin Aini, whom Hedayat met in Tashkent in 1953.¹⁵

A close friend of Jamalzadeh and Hedayat was Bozorg ‘Alavi (1907–96). After being educated in Germany he returned to Iran, where he joined an illegal Marxist group. This eventually led to his incarceration, along with 52 other intellectuals, in the prison of Reza Shah in 1937. After being freed in 1941 he continued his literary career and published two accounts of his years of incarceration as *Panjāh-o seh nafar* [Fifty-three Persons] and *Varaq-pāreh-hā-ye zendān* [Prison Papers]. His most famous novel is *Chesmhāyesh* [Her Eyes] (1952), which describes the love affair of a young aristocratic woman with a revolutionary artist. After the Islamic revolution he briefly visited Iran in 1979 and 1980 and published his last novels entitled *Muriyānāyeh-hā* [Termites] (1989) and *Ravāyat* [Narration] (1998).

Another friend of Hedayat and ‘Alavi was Sadeq Chubak (1916–98), who, in his five collections of short stories and two novels, proved to be one of the most accomplished masters of Persian fiction. He created his short stories with a remarkable awareness of structure and language. He displays an incredible familiarity with the lives and thoughts of his characters, who are mostly chosen from the lowest and most deprived classes.¹⁶ One of his best-known novels is *Sang-e sabūr* [The Patient Stone] (1966).

Jalal al-Ahmad (1923–69) and his wife Simin Daneshvar (b. 1921) belong to a later generation of writers. Jalal al-Ahmad’s fame mostly came with his nonfiction work *Gharbzadegi* [Westomania], which was directed against the onrush of excessive modernization and Westernization that he saw as undermining the national traditions and old canons of behaviour prevalent in Iran.

Though not as prolific as her husband, Simin Daneshvar is one of the most prominent women writers of Iran. Her fame rests primarily on her novel *Savushan* (1969), which soon after publication became a best-seller. It is the story of an honest and patriotic landlord who does not want to sacrifice his tenant farmers for the benefit of the British forces in the Second World War, when his native province of Fars is occupied by them. The story is seen through the eyes of Zari, a young wife and mother, who copes with her idealistic and strong-willed husband while struggling with her desire for traditional family life and her

¹⁵ See Javadi, 1995.

¹⁶ See Kamshad, 1996, p. 128.

need for an individual identity.¹⁷ Daneshvar's two later collections of short stories, *Shahri chon behesht* [A City Like Heaven] (1961) and *Be ki salām konam?* [To Whom Shall I Say Hello?] (1980), are written with sensitivity and masterful insight into the lives of the characters.¹⁸ Daneshvar's novel *Jazireh-ye sargardāni* [Island of Bewilderment] (1993) is partly based on her own life. Her works stand as precious contributions to the world of Iranian fiction. She can be considered the first in the line of female novelists¹⁹ who have taken it upon themselves to create a link between literature and social change, and especially to depict the lives of Iranian women in their struggle to gain their rights.

Some of the most prominent writers of a later generation are discussed below. Though their writings cover a wide variety of topics and styles, a concern with social justice, an examination of the problems and sufferings of the deprived and the poor, psychological novels, and experiments in regional novels are the most pronounced among them. After the fall of the prime minister Mohammad Mosaddeq in 1953 and the establishment of censorship, there was a prevailing sense of disillusionment. More novelists turned to introspection and metaphysical questions of human life, and probing the minds of their characters appears more in their novels. In depicting the morale of a 'vanquished generation', Bahram Sadeqi (1936–86) creates memorable characters. He is very familiar with the social conscience of his age and creates terrifying caricatures that remind one of the realities of his time.

Gholam-Hoseyn Sa'edi (1935–95), better known under his dramatic pen-name Gowhar Morad, who was a doctor and psychiatrist, became involved in political activities right from the end of his school days – this later led to him being imprisoned and tortured. He was a prolific writer and produced more than 30 works, including novels, novellas and collections of short stories, plays and monographs. His experiences as a doctor in a poor district of Tehran, as well as his extensive travels all over Iran, enabled him to produce a vast gallery of characters from a wide cross-section of Iranian society, especially the lower and middle classes. The depiction of their lives, aspirations, hopes – their whole world – was the focal point of Sa'edi's works.²⁰ When his dreams of a freer and more open society were not realized after the revolution, he fled to France where he wrote bitter satirical works such as his play *Othello dar sarzamin-e 'ajāyeb* [Othello in Wonderland] (1984). He also published the second series of his well-known literary magazine *Alefbā* in Paris. Some of

¹⁷ See Daneshvar, 1990.

¹⁸ Most of these stories are collected in two volumes and published by Mage: *Sutra and Other Stories*, tr. Hasan Javadi and Amin Neshat, 1989; Mafi, 1989.

¹⁹ Such as Goli Taraqi (b. 1939), Mahshid Amir-Shahi (b. 1940), Shahrnush Parsipur (b. 1946), Monir Ravanipur (b. 1954) and Fattaneh Hajj Seyyed-Javadi (b. 1948).

²⁰ See Javadi's introduction to a selection of Sa'edi's work, 1980, p. x.

his outstanding novels and collections of short stories are *Dandil* (1966), *Tars-o-larz* [Fear and Trembling] (1968) and *Vāhemeh-hā-ye binām-o-nishān* [Unknown Worries] (1967). Some of his stories have been made into successful films.²¹

The last two decades of the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah (1941–79), in spite of the harsh conditions, were very fruitful for Persian fiction. It seems as if all the experiments of earlier generations had come to fruition; new trends appeared in fiction that made this a very diverse and rich period. Iranian intellectuals' over-dependence on foreign ideals, with disastrous results, created a sense of national awaking. The reactions to it can be seen in al-Ahmad's *Westomania* and *The American Husband* and Sa'edi's *Dandil*. The search in the modern and censored history, that was never properly told, can be witnessed in novels such as *Savushun* by Daneshvar, *Hamsāyeh-hā* [The Neighbours] (1974) by Ahmad Mahmud (b. 1930) and *Shahzadeh Ehtijab* (1968) by Hushang Golshiri (1937–2000). Depicting regional ways of life and taking their stories to the furthest and most remote corners of Iran is another example of the search for roots and a national identity. Sa'edi in his *'Azādārān-i Bayal* [The Mourners of Bayal] (1954), Mahmud Dowlatabadi (b. 1940) in his monumental and epic-like *Kelidar* (1981)²² or his *Jāy-e khāliye Lāluch* [The Empty Place of Laluch] (1979) and Amin Faqiri (b. 1944) in his *Dehkadeh-ye purmalāl* [The Miserable Village] (1958) all explore various aspects of the regional novel.

The failures of the intellectuals and their dilemmas in a society in transition are shown in the works of Sa'edi, Jamal Mir Sadeqi (1933–2003) and Nader Ebrahimi (b. 1936). Iraj Pezeshkzad (b. 1928), in his comic novel *Da'i-jān Nāpoleon* [My Uncle Napoleon] (1973), explores yet another aspect of Iranian society. It is a social satire on the widespread Iranian belief that foreigners (particularly the British) are behind every political event in Iran. It is a brilliantly written and funny novel with a gallery of varied and memorable characters.²³

The Persian novel has come a long way since its early beginnings over a century ago and new genres and new trends have appeared, especially in the last two decades. In the works of Esmā'il Fasih (b. 1935) we see 'war novels' such as *Zemestān 62* [Winter of 83] and in the 'modernist novels' of Parsipur, Mahshid Amirshahi, Ghazaleh 'Alizadeh and Goli Tarraqi a whole range of varied themes can be seen – from love of freedom to social traditions and customs, from a Kafkesque isolation to a nostalgic outlook on the world of childhood. As Hasan 'Abedini says in his *One Hundred Years of Persian Prose*: 'The early

²¹ For a list of Sa'edi's works in English, see Sa'edi, 1980, p. 237.

²² *Kelidar* is a ten-volume 3,000-page saga of Kurdish tribesmen's life and adventures described in a poverty-stricken village in Khurasan. A second similar work by the author, *Ruzgār-e seperi shodeh-ye mardom-e sālkhordeh* [The Bygone Days of Old Folks], was published in 1986.

²³ Pezeshkzad, 1996.

stream of the Persian novel has now become a vast river, let us hope that it will gain more depth while pouring into the sea of people's life.'²⁴

Part Two

LITERATURE IN DARI

(H. Javadi)

Classical literature

The second period of the rule of Sher 'Ali Khan (1863–4; 1869–78) saw the cultural revival of Afghanistan. In 1873 the first printing press was established in Kabul and the periodical *Shams al-nahār* began publication. Though its language was Dari, its style and set-up were modelled on the press in India. The first English translation called *Wa'z-nāma* was from *The Times* of London by a certain 'Abdol-Qadir. The great reformist and thinker Jamal al-Din Asadabadi (Afghani) was in Kabul and Sher 'Ali Khan consulted him on many of his plans for reform. In spite of all this, the reforms did not have a great impact on literature, especially poetry. Most of the poets continued to follow Bedil, Hafiz and Sa'eb.

Mirza Qodsi Herawi (d. 1883), Mirza Mohammad Nabi, known as Wasil (1828–92), Mir Mojtaba Olfat Kabuli and Gholam Mohammad Tarzi (1830–1900) are among the most outstanding poets of this time who imitated the classical masters, especially Bedil and Hafiz. Most of these poets had court affiliations, but there were some who preferred to be independent: Ahmad Naqshbandi (d. 1898) wrote his *Golshan-i hayrat* [Garden of Wonder] on the life of the Prophet Mohammad in imitation of Nizami, and Mohammad Ibrahim Gowhari (d. 1905) wrote many *qasidehs* eulogizing the imams.

Although 'Abdol-Qadir Bedil (1644–1721) had a huge impact on Dari poetry, he was not the only influence. The classical masters of Persian poetry, and more particularly those of the Iraqi and Khurasani schools, also had a major influence on the poetry of the era. The poets of Herat and western Afghanistan, being near Persia, were influenced by the *Bazgasht*, or neoclassical, school of Persian poetry. Fatollah Khan Shaybani, one of the poets of the *Bazgasht* school who was in the Persian army in Herat around the year 1857,

²⁴ 'Abedini, 1990, Vol. 2, p. 367.

influenced a number of poets of western Afghanistan. This influence even extended to later generations of poets such as Esma‘il Siyah, ‘Abdol-Hoseyn Towfiq (b. 1908) and Latif Nazimi (b. 1946). Even in our own times, a poet like Khalilollah Khalili was distinctly influenced by Persian poets because of spending some time in Herat.

The early writings in prose were mostly on the country’s history: *Pādishāhān-e Mote’ākhter-i Afghānistān* by Ya‘qub ‘Ali Khan (Kabul, 1889–90); *Tatemmat al-bayān fi tārikh al-Afghan* by Sayyed Jamal (Kabul, 1899); and *Sirāj al-tawārikh* by Fayz Mohammad Hazara (Kabul, 1913–16). The last-mentioned work, which mostly deals with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was written in honour of Amir Habibollah Khan (1901–19), one of whose titles was *Sirāj al-mella*.

Modern prose and journalism

Modern prose and journalism in Afghanistan begins with Mahmud Tarzi (1865–1933), who spent 23 years of his early life abroad, mostly in Damascus and Istanbul, and translated many books from Ottoman Turkish. *Around the World in Eighty Days* and three other works by Jules Verne, as well as a number of Tarzi’s original works of poetry and prose, were among these publications. After returning to Afghanistan, he managed to obtain permission to continue the publication of *Serāj al-akhbār Afghāni*, which had been banned after only one issue on account of its democratic positions. From 1911 to 1918 Tarzi edited this journal, which exerted a profound political and cultural influence not only in Afghanistan but also in North India and Central Asia. It became the region’s most liberal, progressive and anti-colonialist publication. Because of his personal relations with Habibollah Khan and his sons, Tarzi managed to continue publishing this periodical; in its eighth year, he added a newspaper for children, which was the first of its kind in Afghanistan.

After a fruitful diplomatic and civil-service career, Tarzi (who was the father-in-law of Amir Amanullah, 1919–29) had to flee the country to Istanbul in 1928 because of the uprising against the king’s reforms. He died there five years later. In later years, four important newspapers – *Amān-e Afghān* (1919), *Islāh* (1929), *Anis* (1929) and *Tolu‘ Afghān* (1921) – followed the path that Tarzi had opened up in journalism. The last publication appeared in both Dari and Pashto, and it was at this period that Pashto’s becoming the official language of the country was discussed; it was later to become a heated political issue.

Tarzi tried very hard to extend his reformist ideas to the domain of poetry and to persuade contemporary poets to write on social and political themes. Though some complied, and even a Sufi poet like ‘Abdol-Haqq Bitab (1892–1971) wrote a few poems on modern advancements, the old ‘Indian style’ of poetry (*sabk-i hindi*) with its high-flown

imagery and hyperbole continued. Among the poets who followed the call of Tarzi, albeit in a limited fashion, was ‘Abdol-Ghani Mostaghni (1875–1933), who was also influenced by the poetry of Malek al-Sho‘ara Bahar and was praised by him. ‘Abdol-Hadi Dawi (1895–1982), under his pen-name Parishan, was another poet who wrote *ghazals* in the style of Iraqi and translated the poems of Iqbal Lahuri into Dari verse. Mir Mohammad ‘Ali Azad Kaboli (1884–1944), ‘Abdol-Ghafur Nadim (1880–1917) and ‘Abdollah Qari (1870–1945) were among the outstanding poets of this period. Mohammad Esma’il Siyah, known as Guzak (1855–1945), was a satirist who successfully imitated ‘Obeyd Zakani and humorously wrote about modern advancements in the age of Amanullah Khan.

The leading poet of recent years was Khalilollah Khalili (1909–90), who mostly followed the Khurasani style, and his poems are distinguished by their romantic and epic character. His *Ariana Songs* describe historical events in Afghanistan and in his other poems the impressions of his travels in Europe and the Middle East can be seen. Though he experimented in modern poetry in the *chāhārpāreh* (quatrain) form, it was in classical poetry that Khalili reached new heights. ‘Abdol-Rahman Pazhwak (1921–85), ‘Abdol-Hakim Ziya’i and Mohammad ‘Osman Sidqi (1914–37) all followed the traditional styles. Other contemporary poets such as Ziya Qarizadah (b. 1922), Mohammed Yusof Ayinah, Rahim Elham (1930–2003), Soleyman Laiq (1930), Mohammad ‘Asef Fekrat Herawi (b. 1946), Wujudi Panjshiri and Wasef Bakhtari (b. 1942) have all tried their hand at both traditional and modern styles. Bakhtari (who now lives in Los Angeles) in the classical style reminds one of Malek al-Sho‘ara Bahar, and in the Nima’i style (i.e. the style of Nima Yushij) is like Akhavan-e Sales. Like him he has mourned the tragedies of his nation, and he has been always with them, from the prison of Pol-i Charhki to the self-imposed exile in Los Angeles.

Though some Afghan poets were familiar with English and French modern poetry and blank verse, it was through the influence of Nima Yushij from Iran that they turned to a different type of poetry. However, their initial experimentation was far from successful, and some like Khalili even went back to the traditional classical style. Others continued to write in both classical and modern styles, but (unlike Iran) in Afghanistan poets of great stature did not appear in the realm of blank or free verse. In the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s traditional poetry managed to flourish. Bariq Shafi’i (b. 1931) in his *Setak* [Tree Branch] (Kabul, 1963) and *Shahr-i hamasah* [City of Epics] (Kabul, 1979), Mahmud Farani (b. 1938) in his *Ākharin setāreh* [The Last Star] (Kabul, 1963) and *Ruyā-ye shā’er* [Poet’s Dream] (Kabul, 1967), Gholam Mujadid Laiq (b. 1930) in his *Bādbān* [The Kite] (Kabul, 1981) and Vasef Bakhtari in his *Dar kuche-hā-yi sorkh-e shafāq*

[In the Crimson Lanes of the Sunset] (Kabul, 1981) all display great talent and ingenuity.

In recent years, under the influence of modern Persian poets such as Shamlu, Akhavan, Forugh, Nader Naderpur and Tavallali, Afghan poets of the younger generation have experimented more in the Nima'i style, sometimes with brilliant success: 'Abdol-Qahhar 'Asi (1957–84; he died when his house in Kabul was struck by a rocket), in his numerous collections of poems, gives a vivid description of the war and the capture of Kabul by the Mujahidin. Mohammad 'Aref Pazhman (b. 1946), Latif Pedram (b. 1963) and Mohammad 'Aqel Birang Kuhdamani (b. 1951) all belong to this group of modernist poets. All three went for higher education to Iran and the tragedy of war weighs heavily in their poetic and prose works. Meanwhile classical poetry, especially the *ghazal*, continues to be a favourite poetic form among contemporary Afghan poets. Layla Taymuri (b. 1964), Soraya Vahidi (b. 1942), Razeq Fani (b. 1943) and many others have published poetical collections in the classical style.

Literature of resistance

The occupation of Afghanistan by Soviet forces in 1979, which lasted for almost a decade, and the subsequent years of war and the domination of the Taliban had a cataclysmic effect on the country. On the one hand, it forced many millions of Afghans to emigrate to Iran, Pakistan, Europe and the USA while, on the other, it engulfed Afghanistan in a disastrous civil war of unprecedented dimensions. On the literary scene, it also had far-reaching consequences. A 'literature of resistance' (*adabiyāt-e moqāvemat*) was gradually created, mostly by those poets and writers who had remained in the country but also by those who had left. This type of literature had existed before the Russian occupation and there were many examples of it during the war with the British and later on. Layla Sarahat (1958–2004), Partov Naderi (b. 1952), Gholamshah Sarshar Shomali (1930–81; died in prison in Kabul) as well as 'Abdol-Qahhar 'Asi and Latif Pedram were among the poets who wrote against the Russian occupation of Afghanistan. Among the Afghans who had emigrated to Iran, 'Ali Fada'i was one of the first to publish an anthology of resistance poems in 1984 (*Majmū'a-yi sorūd-i khūn*) to be followed by many more of its kind in the years to come.

Literary studies and novels

Before considering the novel and the short story in modern Dari literature, a brief mention should be made of literary studies. Between 1951 and 1955 'Abdol-Hayy Habibi founded

the *Āzād Afghānistān* (Free Afghanistan) Party in Peshawar; it brought out a publication with this name. The party advocated democratic ideas and criticized the government for corruption and its abuses of human rights. After returning to Afghanistan in 1961, Habibi headed the Afghan Historical Society (founded in 1942) and was one of the first scholars to print critical editions of a number of classical Persian texts. Under the auspices of this society, the periodical *Āriānā* was published over nearly three decades, making a significant contribution to history, literature and art in Afghanistan. The publication of the *Encyclopaedia Āriānā* (Kabul, 1949–69) was also an important step in the advancement of literary and historical research. In 1965 a period of relative freedom opened up for the press and numerous periodicals and newspapers began publication. Politically the most important among them were the Communist Party newspapers *Parcham* [Flag] and *Khaleq*.

One of the first novels that Tarzi translated from among the works of the nineteenth-century French novelist Xavier de Montépin was the *Tragedies of Paris*, which along with his other translations became the source of inspiration for the first Afghan novels. The first Afghan work of fiction was *Jahād-e akbar* [The Great Jihad] (1919) by Mohammad Hoseyn Jalandari (1882–1960), which depicts the struggle of the Afghans against the British invaders. A graduate of Aligarh University and a prolific writer, Jalandari was probably familiar with many Western-style novels, but as a result of the translations of Tarzi and others, the language had become flexible and dynamic enough for fiction. In vivid and rather conversational language, the author relates the story of Dost Mohammad Khan's son, Vazir Mohammad Akbar Khan, who is traditionally regarded as the hero of the Anglo-Afghan wars.

In the following years, while the development of fiction continued, historical and romantic novels and long stories were especially favoured. In the 1950s and 1960s short stories became more prominent than long novels. 'Abdol-Rahman Pazhvak could be taken as an example: in his stories such as *The Gypsy Girl* and *Sudabeh and Zal* and *People's Legends*, he turns to romance, classical literature and folklore. Rahnavard Zariab (b. 1924) is a novelist and short-story writer of a later period who has published more than 100 short stories. Some of these writers display great sophistication and depth such as Zarif Sadeqi (b. 1942) in his novel *Escape from Darkness* (Kabul, 1967). 'Alem Eftekhar (b. 1951) is an interesting example of a writer of regional novels and short stories and vividly describes the lives of the villagers around his native Jozjan.

Between 1953 and 1968, under the influence of the Communist Party of Afghanistan as well as the translations of many foreign authors, such as Balzac, Maupassant, Dickens, Jack London, Hemingway, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Sholokhov, Gorky and others, who had been translated mostly into Persian in Iran, the writing of realistic stories in a local

setting became very popular. Iranian leftist writers such as Bozorg 'Alavi had a considerable influence on the Afghan writers of this period. Romance and poetic themes were not much in favour. The writers turned to social and realistic themes with a regional setting. One of the most well-known figures of this period was 'Abdol-Ghafur Bershna (1912–82), who based his stories on folk tales (*Qesse-hā va afsāneh-hā* [Stories and Tales], Kabul, 1973). Babrak Arghand (b. 1946), Jalal Nurani (b. 1958) and 'Aziz al-Rahman Fathi are among the realistic and regional novelists and short-story writers.

With the premiership of Mohammad Daud Khan (1953–63), the hope of democracy and an open society faded once again. Instead of political themes, social criticism and stories with historical, social or romantic themes became popular.²⁵ There was an improvement in the condition of women and a very successful female writer was Roqqiya Abu Bakr (1919–2004), who wrote short stories with social themes and translated a number of world classics into Dari. Of a younger generation of writers who started after the resignation of Daud Khan and the appearance of a semblance of democracy, 'Azam Rahnavard Zariab (b. 1945) and his wife Spozhmai Zariab (b. 1950), Mohammad Akram Osman (b. 1937) and Mohammad Saber Rosta Bakhtari (1938–2004) are the most significant novelists.

In this period, short-story writing developed considerably. Among the writers of shorter fiction were Razzaq Ma'mun, Zolmai Babakuhi, Gol Agha Nazari (b. 1960), Jalal Nurani (b. 1951), Mohammad 'Aref Pazhman (b. 1949) and Maryam Mahbub (1954–2004), who was the second most important woman writer of this period. The most well-known novels are *Bachah-ye yatim* [Orphan Child] (1973) and *Bāzi-ye sarnevesht* [Play of Fortune] by Mohammad Aman Varestah, and *Azhdahā-ye khodi* [Dragon Inside] (Kabul, 1973) by Baha al-Din Majruh (b. 1928). The latter is a large-scale philosophical novel in which the writer makes use of Afghan folklore and Sufi literature. It is considered one of the best Afghan novels of its genre.

The post-communist period

After the communist coup of April 1978 which overthrew Daud, Afghan fiction turned mostly to propaganda and to idealistic and socialistic themes. The novels and short stories of this period had the stereotyped characters peculiar to such literature. Three outstanding novelists of the period were Asadollah Habib (b. 1941) in *Dās-hā va dast-hā* [Sickles and Hands] (Kabul, 1983), Babrak Arghand in his three-volume novel *Rāh-e sorkh* [The Red Road] (1983) and 'Alim Eftekhar in his *Golule-hā gap mizanand* [Bullets Talk] (Kabul,

²⁵ Of the notable novels of this period, mention should be made of Fathi's *Dar pāy-e Nastaran* [At the Foot of Nasturtium] (Kabul, 1951), Ghulam Ghuth Khaybari's *Tofang-dārān-i Khaybar* (1955) [Musketeers of Khayber] and Shafi's (b. 1921) *Hākem* [Governor] (1956).

1983). There was another group of writers who chose a very different path and rather opposed the former group. They were more individualistic and dealt with the despair and dilemmas of people in the modern world. They followed Camus and Sartre or (among Persian writers) Sadeq Chubak and Sadeq Hedayat. The most outstanding among them were the couple Spozhmai Zariab and 'Azam Rahnavard Zariab.

Rahnavard Zariab is a prolific writer who began writing short stories in the early 1980s. With his collections of stories such as *Kutāh āvāzi az miyān-i qarn-hā* [A Short Song from the Midst of Centuries] (Kabul, 1983), *Mard-i kuhestān* [The Man of the Mountain] (Kabul, 1984) and *Dusti az shahr-i dur* [A Friend from a Far City] (Kabul, 1986), he became one of Afghanistan's best-known and most respected fiction writers. Zariab uses historical, mythological and romantic themes for his stories, but in his realistic short stories or novellas he tends towards naturalism, with vivid descriptions of the sufferings of his characters. In his stylistically complex novel, *Naqsh-hā wa pindār-hā* [Images and Perceptions] (Kabul, 1987), the identity of the narrator is continuously changing from a 'self' to 'others'. Zariab in this novel seems to be very much under the influence of Hedayat's *The Blind Owl*, with its Kafkaesque atmosphere.

Spozhmai Zariab, in her many collections of stories, such as *Rostam-hā wa Sohrāb-hā* [Rostams and Sohrabs] (Kabul, 1983), *Dasht-e Qābil* [Cain's Waste] (Kabul, 1987)²⁶ and *Divar-ha gush dashtand* [The Walls Had Ears], displays the influence of Camus and Kafka. Her novel *Romān dar keshwari digar* [The Novel in Another Land] (Kabul, 1986) describes her own life as a student in Paris.

In comparison with the so-called 'official' literature, the latter group is sometimes referred to as 'literature of resistance'. There were other writers who followed neither of the two trends. Akram Osman, a talented satirist who began his career as a radio journalist at Radio Kabul in 1965, is an outstanding example of the last group. Among his numerous collections of short stories, *Dracula wa shagerdash* [Dracula and his Pupil] (Kabul, 1979) and *Waqti ke nay-hā gol mikonand* [When the Reeds Blossom] (Kabul, 1983) are the best known.

In this period, the writing of fiction and particularly short stories developed in an unprecedented manner. The appearance of many essays of criticism on the works of Akram Osman, Rahnavard Zariab, Spozhmai Zariab and many others in journals such as *Anis*, *Gharjistān* and *Zhunden* was another indication that works of fiction were being taken seriously. Towards the end of the communist regime, as the civil war began to rage, fiction

²⁶ This collection was reprinted in Mashhad in 1994 and its French translation appeared in Paris as *La plaine de Cain*, 2001. Her other work, *Divār-hā gush dāshtand*, is published as *Ces murs qui nous écoutent*, Paris, 2000.

writing declined and a mood of pessimism and despair set in. *Sadā'i az khākestar* [A Voice from the Ashes] and *'Atr-i gol-i sinjid* [Fragrance of Oleaster Blossom], both by Qader Muradi, *Khākestar wa khāk* by Qatiq Rahimi (b. 1962) and *Āvār-i shab* [Collapse of the Night] by Sarvar Azarakhsh (b. 1948) give depressing and gruesome pictures of what was happening. After the fall of the leftist regime at the hands of the Taliban and the emigration of tens of thousands of Afghans, Afghan fiction in particular and literature in general became an 'émigré literature'. Literary activities remained only in Herat, which was not under the control of the Taliban. The *Anjoman-i Adabi-yi Herat* (Literary Association of Herat) continued its work and the mass exodus of writers and artists did not apply to its members.

The largest groups of Afghans went to Iran and Pakistan, and because of the commonality of the language in Iran, Dari literature thrived there. In Tehran, Mashhad and Qom literary circles were formed. Even in Tehran there were workshops for young Afghan writers. Two literary journals in Tehran, *Khatt-e sevrum* [The Third Line] and *Dorr-e Dari* [Dari Pearl], published important short stories and essays. Among the early group of émigré writers, some actively joined the resistance and wrote ideologically highly charged fiction. However, there were exceptions: Maryam Mahbub (1954–2004), Spozhmai Zariab, 'Atiq Rahimi²⁷ and Zalmay Babakuhi (b. 1951) in the West, and writers such as Sarvar Azarakhsh, Khalid Nawisa and Seyyed Ishaq Shoja'i in Iran and Pakistan, have tried to explore their new environments under the condition of exile and homelessness while reminiscing about the past. The second generation of writers, who mostly grew up outside Afghanistan, did not experience the war and have been influenced by the literary trends of the countries where they live. Sometimes their language is not as pure as the earlier group, and in the case of some younger writers in Iran, the mixing of Dari and Persian is noticeable.

The works of Afghan writers in exile, as well as the retelling of what happened in their country, are far from over. Yet it is ironic that in spite of war and the rule of the Taliban, the amount of literary works, both prose and poetry, has been considerable and their impact wide and far-reaching.

²⁷ Rahimi, 1999.

Part Three

LITERATURE IN TAJIK

(*A. Alimardonov*)

Russia's conquest of Central Asia at the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century had certain objective consequences which were historically progressive. It put an end to the feudal internecine wars, to slavery, and to the isolation and stagnation of the Central Asian peoples, who now had an opportunity to learn about the achievements of cutting-edge science and technology in Europe and Russia; the path to knowledge and enlightenment was opened to them. Literature drew closer to everyday life and gave an increasingly realistic reflection thereof. Despite opposition from the forces of reaction and religious fanaticism to everything new and progressive, the ideas of the popular Jadid movement found ever wider reflection in the works of such famous Tajik poets and writers of the period as Qari Rahmatullah Wazih (1818–93), Ahmad Donish (1827–97) and Shams al-Din Shahin (1859–94) and their followers and those who shared their beliefs.

The splendid works of these literary figures also reflected such important issues of the Jadid movement as criticism of feudalism and propaganda for the new progressive social structure of Russia and Europe, the need to study the secular sciences, the defence of working people's rights and interests and so on.

At the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, the Jadid movement, and especially the pioneering ideas of its founder in Tajik literature, Ahmad Donish, drew the majority of its followers from among scholars and poets. These included such well-known contemporary poets and writers as 'Abd al-Qadir Khoja Sauda, Tash Khoja Asiri, Mirza Siraj Hakim, Mirza Azimi Sami, 'Aji (pseudonym of Sa'id Ahmad Siddiqi, 1865–1927), Khairat, Zu-Funun and others, who had acquired both an open-minded outlook and literary skills from Donish's works (see Chapter 7 for details on some of these authors). Increasing attention was devoted in their work to the topical and vital issues of Tajik society as it endeavoured to follow the European countries and Russia on the path to progress and prosperity. In this way, by setting and developing a realistic tendency in the

poetry and prose of the time, the leading poets and writers strove to move Tajik literature closer to social realities and contemporary demands.

At the same time, Tajik literature of the period continued to be greatly influenced by the 'Indian style' (*sabk-i hindi*), especially the works of the Persian-language poet from India, Mirza 'Abdol-Qadir Bedil (1644–1721). The attitude of the progressive poets of that time to the works of Bedil and their imitation of his style were quite a different matter. For example, Donish had penetrated Bedil's refined and symbolic poetry so deeply that he was able to comment for his friends on many difficult ideas in Bedil's philosophical and literary works, explaining them in simple and understandable language. Under the influence of Donish, many progressive poets of those times, such as Sauda, Wazih, Shahin and Muztarib, who at the beginning of their creative life had simply copied everything of Bedil's, later abandoned his style and turned to the more easily understood and accessible style of the Persian-language poets of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.²⁸

There were no important literary circles at the court of the last Manghit rulers of Bukhara. However, in keeping with tradition, there were certain poets and scholars who amused the emir and his courtiers with eulogies and anecdotes. At that time, besides the presence of a certain literary milieu in large towns such as Bukhara, Samarkand and Khujand, in various provinces of the emirate and in the provincial towns²⁹ there were local literary circles which bred a whole series of talented poets.³⁰ An examination of their poems points to the common tradition of Persian-language literature in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran and India, and the creative ties between these countries' writers.

It should be noted that the creative heritage of Donish played an important part in awakening the people and producing new generations of Tajik Jadids including, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Sadridin Aini (1878–1954). Following Donish in his creative literary work, Aini attached himself to the only opposition movement in the emirate of Bukhara at that time, the Jadid movement, which after 1916 called itself the Young Bukharans and was directed against the emir of Bukhara.

Tajik literature at the beginning of the twentieth century developed in close step with the socio-political and economic situation, and to a certain degree reflected contemporary changes in Tajik society. A large part in this was played by Persian and Turkic newspapers, including the first newspaper in Persian, *Bukhārā-i sharif* [Bukhara the Noble] (1912), published in Kagan. The bestknown poetry and prose works of the period were Fitrat's

²⁸ Aini, 1954, p. 108.

²⁹ Kash (Shahr-i Sabz), Ura-tyube, Hisar, Kulab, Qara-Tegin, Darwaz, Badakhshan and so on.

³⁰ Hasrat, Mauzun, Irsi, Farigh, Bismil, Nasikh Kulabi, Rahimi, Khoja Husain, Khazani, Nasimi, Garmi, 'Abd al-Hayy Mirja' Harfi, Bahrin, Darwazi, Yari, Fitrat, Ghafili, Mirza Liqa and others, altogether 63 of them. See Habibov, 1984a; Habibov, 1984b.

stories, *The Dispute* and *Stories by an Indian Traveller* and his collection of verse *Saiha* as well as Aini's story, *The Happy Family* and Mirza Siraj's *Gift to the Inhabitants of Bukhara*.

The Soviet period witnessed the conception and birth of the new Tajik literature. It was created by poetry – Aini's famous poem, *March of Freedom* (1918). In the period 1920–40, special importance was attached to the artistic word in the struggle against the enemies of the Tajik people, and Aini was in the front rank of literary figures who, by the power of their artistic works, scholarly articles and socio-political journalism, debunked the enemies and critics of the Tajiks, and angrily denounced them. An important part in their publication and distribution was played by the journal *Shu'la-i inqilāb* [The Torch of the Revolution] (1919–21), which besides Aini also published such writers of the new times as A. Munzim and S. 'Ali-zoda. The poetry of the 1920s (A. Munzim, A. Hamdi and A. Fitrat) was essentially propagandistic.

Tajik literature, as part of Soviet literature, carried out the ideological instructions of the times, raising and artistically interpreting the same issues and themes as Soviet literature as a whole. Tajik literature from 1924 to 1950 mainly glorified the October revolution and its achievements, extolled freedom, championed science, knowledge and equal rights for women, criticized religious fanaticism and the relics of feudalism in daily life, and highlighted the problems of collectivization and industrialization, the fight against fascism, and the situation in the rear and on the battle-fronts during the Great Patriotic War (Second World War), and so on. The poetry of those years, having undergone some change, was to a considerable degree coloured by a romantic perception of life and filled with a lofty civic passion engendered by revolutionary reality (the poems of Lahuti, S. Aini, P. Sulaiman and others). Tajik poetry was raised to still greater heights by the emergence of talented young poets such as A. Dihati, M. Tursun-zoda, M. Mirshakar, Kh. Yusufi and B. Rahim-zoda, and the 'People's Poets', S. Wali-zoda, Y. Wafa and B. Khudaydad-zoda, who wrote a number of splendid poems.

In the Soviet period, Tajik prose, too, developed both quantitatively and qualitatively (B. 'Azaza, R. Jalil, J. Ikrami, H. Karim, S. Ulugh-zoda, 'Ali-Khush, etc). Then and in subsequent years, a large number of stories, tales and novels were published: *Ādina*, *Dāhunda*, *Death of a Money-Lender* and *Slaves* by Aini; *Shādi* and *I Plead Guilty* by J. Ikrami; *Nawābād* and *Noble Friends* by S. Ulugh-zoda; *The Immortals* by R. Jalil; and *Loyalty* by F. Niyazi. The growth of the literary skills of Tajik prose writers ensured that in their works, the traditions of Persian-Tajik prose were fused with the experiences and achievements of European and Russian literary figures of the past and present. Since then, Tajik fiction has developed so rapidly in terms of both quantity and quality that it has even grown ahead of poetry.

Satire was a genre which enjoyed considerable success at this time. This was demonstrated on the one hand by satirical stories, short poems and anecdotes (Aini, B. 'Azizi, H. Karim, etc.) and on the other hand by Aini's well-known story, *Death of a Money-Lender*.

The birth of drama, quite a new prose genre for Tajik literature, dates from the middle of the 1920s, although it developed more fully only in the 1930s and 1940s. This was when the plays of A. Amin-zoda, J. Ikrami, S. Ghani, A. 'Usmanova, S. Ulugh-zoda and M. Tursun-zoda were published, bearing witness to the beginning of the successful development of this new genre of Tajik literature.

A feature of Tajik Soviet literature is its handling of internal problems and conflicts – the collapse of the emirate and the feudal system, the struggles against the Basmachis, the fascists and so on. Basically these themes were dealt with in such genres as poetry, short stories and socio-political articles and essays. The theme of the Great Patriotic War was addressed in poetry: *Mardistān* and *Tanya's Victory* by Lahuti, *Son of the Motherland* by M. Tursun-zoda and *People from the Roof of the World* by M. Mirshakar. It should be noted that the language of Tajik Soviet literature was noted for its simplicity and closeness to everyday speech.

The themes of the heroism of the Soviet people during the Great Patriotic War and the victory over fascism remained important in the following years. It was continued in Tajik literature at a qualitatively new level. Outstanding among the large numbers of works devoted to this theme are the novels of F. Niyazi (*Don't Say the Forest is Deserted*), Talis' story *Summer* and the deeply moving poems of M. Qana'at (*Waves of the Dniepr* and *Voices of Stalingrad*). Qana'at's poems focus for the first time in Tajik literature on the internal human world, the thinking and lofty moral qualities which speak of the grandeur of human beings in general, and the meaning of existence on earth in particular.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, Tajik literature saw the arrival of talented young writers brought up in the creative style of Aini and Lahuti.³¹ The period from the end of the 1950s to the 1980s was a time of intense development of Tajik literature. As a consequence of the changes in policy by the Soviet state at that time, writers gained great creative freedom and thus considerably expanded the ideological themes and artistic boundaries of Tajik literature. As a result, Tajik poetry and prose, including drama, gained new highly artistic works which became part of the golden treasury of literature of the Soviet period. The internal, spiritual world of the human being, human experiences and thoughts increasingly attracted the attention of Tajik writers.³² Tajik poetry of the 1960s–80s is greatly indebted

³¹ These included A. Shukoha, M. Farhat, A. Bahari, G. Mirza, P. Talis, F. Muhammadiev, A. Sidqi, U. Rajab, G. Sulaimanova, M. Qana'at and M. Hakimova.

³² M. Qana'at, L. Sher-'Ali, B. Sabir, Gulrukhsar, G. Safar-zoda, H. Faizullah, Gulnazar, Ziya 'Abdullah, N. Qasim and others.

to the creative work of M. Qana‘at for notable advances in form, content, ideological theme and stylistic and artistic content. At this time, the long poem underwent substantial development.

With regard to Tajik fiction, one should note its ongoing qualitative evolution and the broadening of the scope of its ideological themes and genres. One of its characteristic features is its appeal to the national traditions and the history of the Tajik people, and a large number of historical novels and stories have been published.³³

In the leading prose works of the 1960s–80s, the story, essay, tale and novel give realistic depictions of various aspects of life in Tajik society. At the same time, increasing attention was being paid to the internal world of the human being. Tajik literature of this period witnessed the development and growing maturity of psychological prose.³⁴ Drama too underwent further development during this period with such writers as S. Ulugh-zoda, G. ‘Abdullah and F. Ansari. It was at this time that Tajik literature became widely known and recognized, both within the Soviet Union and beyond its borders. Proof of this is the translation of Tajik works into the languages of the peoples of the USSR and other countries of the world.

Part Four

LITERATURE IN OTHER INDO-IRANIAN LANGUAGES

(I. Hasnain)

Kashmiri

The adoption of Urdu as a court language in 1907 was a major setback for the Kashmiri language. So greatly did it affect the status of Kashmiri that to speak it even at home was considered beneath one’s dignity. On the literary front, the deaths of Parmanand and Prakash Ram brought a lull in literary creativity. The mellifluous voice of Mir had faded.

³³ The best examples include the novels *Shurāb* by R. Jalil; *The Twelve Gates of Bukhara* and *Safar-Makhsun in Bukhara* by J. Ikrami; *The Adventures of Safar-Makhsun* by J. Ikrami jointly with H. Nazarov; the novel *Wāsi‘* and the short story *The Sogdian Legend* by S. Ulugh-zoda; and the novel *Star in the Night* by R. Hadi-zoda.

³⁴ *Tā’rikh-i adabiyāt-i soveti-i Tājik*, 1974, 1978, 1982, 1984.

Kashmiri took a long time to salvage its linguistic and literary identity. Mahjur, Zinda Kaul, Azad and Nadim (see below) had to pull Kashmiri out of the stupor into which it had relapsed.

Like several other Indian literatures, the renaissance of Kashmiri literature is also closely linked with post-independence literary activities. The political events in Kashmir, especially the 1947 attack, resulted in the mobilization of Kashmiri writers and other artists in defence of their valley. The Cultural Front was organized and for the first time artists were assigned a role in a period of turmoil and aggression. The establishment of Radio Kashmir on 31 July 1948 provided a great opportunity for the use and development of the Kashmiri language and its adoption in a variety of new contexts. Creative writers made serious attempts to develop those literary forms that had been neglected earlier, for example, drama, the short story and prose. Until this time the main literary form had been poetry and the dominant themes were nationalism (defined rather narrowly), the Kashmiri identity and religious harmony. In 1958 the Jammu and Kashmir Academy for Art, Culture and Languages was founded, which provided further encouragement for the Kashmiri language.

The early modern period saw the assimilation of Persian poetic forms like the *masnavi* (poem in couplets) and the *ghazal* (love poem), the development of the *lila* lyric (see below) and the continuation of the Sufi tradition. Mahmud Gami (1765–1855) introduced the *ghazal* form to Kashmiri poetry. He also wrote traditional *vatsuns* (a type of song), original compositions in *roph* (a folksong form), *naats* (eulogies in praise of the Prophet) and *masnavis*, which were mostly abridged or adapted translations of Persian originals. He wrote numerous *ghazals* and poems based on the legendary love stories of *Laila-Majnu*, *Shirin-Khusro* and *Yousuf-Zulaikha*, which is a translation of a Persian *masnavi*. His diction is largely Persianized, accompanied by the use of Persian constructions.

Maqbool Shah Kraiwari (1802–75) wrote several *masnavis* besides his immortal *Gulrez* (1849), a metrical romance depicting passionate human love in the story of Ajab Malik and Nosh Lab. Though the term is borrowed from Persian, the setting is typically Kashmiri. Kraiwari also wrote *Haroon Rashiid* (1852) and *Gris' nama* (1853), a frank satire on a Kashmiri farmer. He also made a name in the field of lyrical poetry. The *masnavis* written during this period were mostly *razmia* (combat), *bazmia* (love) and occasionally *hazlia* (burlesque).³⁵

³⁵ Some other famous *masnavi* poets of this period were Prakash Ram (*Ramavtarcharit*), Lachhman Raina 'Bulbul' (*Saamnaami, Nal-o-daman*), Waliullah Matoo (*Heemal*), 'Abdul Ahad Nazim (*Zain-ur-Arab*), Amiruddin Kreeri (*Saamnaami, Khaavar naami*) and Mohiuddin Miskeen (*Zeba nigaar*).

Rasool Mir (d. 1870), the founder of the romantic trend, is the most famous lyricist in Kashmiri; his poetry is both sensuous and romantic and his style is simple, direct and easily intelligible. He was in fact considered a pioneer in maintaining the purity of the Kashmiri language and, hence, is rightly regarded as ‘the father of the Kashmiri *ghazal*’.³⁶ He also wrote several mystical poems.

Parmanand (1791–1874) and his school represent the *Lila* group of poets. *Lila* lyrics are hymns in praise of a personified god, usually Krishna. Parmanand wrote three very long poems, *Radha suyamwara* [The Choice of Radha’s Spouse], *Sudama Charitra* [The Story of Sudama] and *Siva-lagan* [The Marriage of Siva]. He also wrote other poems like the *Lotuses*, *Chakras*, *Mandalas*, *Sahaza*, *Vyatsar*, etc., which are remarkable for their melody and their spiritual and devotional conviction.³⁷ Prakash Ram, who wrote *Ramavataarliilaa*, is said to be the founder of the *lila* lyric.

The years 1930–47 were the period of Ghulam Ahmed Mahjur (1885–1952) whereas from 1947 onwards was the era of Dinanath Kaul Nadim (1916–88), also referred to as the ‘Nadim era’. Mahjur switched to Kashmiri after 1918. Apart from continuing the *lol* tradition, he, along with ‘Abdul Ahad Azad (1903–48), gave Kashmiri poetry an individual identity through the concept of ‘*Kashmiriyat*’ – the Kashmiri identity. Ghulam Nabi ‘Dil-roz’ (1916–41), Zinda Kaul (1884–1965) and ‘Abdul Satter Asi (d. 1951) are some other better-known poets of this period. Zinda Kaul, popularly known as ‘Masterji’, wrote poetry in the *bhakti* (devotional religious) tradition and enriched *bhakti* poetry after Krishna Razdan (1851–1926). Ahad Zargar and Samad Mir represent the Sufi tradition, which is also discernible in the poetry of Amin Kamil (b. 1924) and Ghulam Rasool Santosh (b. 1929). The *naats* of ‘Abdul Ahad Nadim (1840–1911) are a highly prized contribution to devotional poetry.

Dinanath Nadim revolutionized Kashmiri poetry and may be considered an epoch-maker and a trend-setter. There is no published collection of his work, save *Shihil’ kul’* for which he was honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Award. Most of his poems were either presented in poetic symposia (*mush’ira* or *kavi sammelan*) or published in local journals. Like his predecessors and some contemporaries, his decision to write in Kashmiri was a late one. His first Kashmiri poem in 1942, *Maj Kashmir* [Mother Kashmir], coincided with the time when Kashmir was passing through a critical phase, with the mass-movement ‘Quit Kashmir’ slogan challenging the established Dogra dynasty. Nadim’s *Aravali prarakhna* and *Grav* [A Complaint] are poems of patriotism, revolution and freedom. Here he is

³⁶ Bamzai, 1973, p. 836.

³⁷ Besides Parmanand, the other members of the *Lila* group were Pandit Krishan Razdan, Pandit Lakshmanji, etc.

asking the kinds of questions that members of the Progressive Writers Movement were already asking in other parts of India. Consider, for example:

Why should the share of a labourer be stolen by a capitalist?

Why should a honey-bee circle the flowers and take away their honey?

Perhaps this theme was not new for Indian poetry, but it was new for Kashmiri. Nadim introduced a number of stylistic innovations like blank verse, free verse, dramatic monologue, the sonnet, haiku, etc. by departing radically from classicism. His *Bi g'avi ni az* [I Will Not Sing Today] in blank verse caught the imagination of Kashmiris – literate and illiterate – and was adopted by other poets. These innovations excited Nadim's contemporaries as well as poets of later generations.³⁸ 'Abdul Rahman Rahi's *G'avun chum* [I Have to Sing] clearly shows Nadim's influence. Rahi has been a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award.

The short story in Kashmiri came into vogue as a result of the popular uprising and the installation of the first popular government in 1947. Prose had been non-existent until then. The sense of nationalism associated with the New Kashmir movement attracted Kashmiri intellectuals and writers with a progressive and leftist orientation and inspired them to switch over to Kashmiri. A realistic view of the human condition largely dominated their writings. Akhtar Mohi-ud-Din's (b. 1928) *Sath sangar* [The Seven Hilltops] (1955) was the first-ever collection of Kashmiri short stories; it portrayed the contradictions of the middle class and also the pulsating life among the backward classes. Akhtar Mohi-ud-Din received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1958. Autar Krishen Rahbar, a contemporary of Akhtar, and a host of others such as Sufi Ghulam Mohammad (b. 1929), Umesh Kaul, etc. published stories depicting the social malaise, oppression and communal tensions in post-independence Kashmir.

After 1955 the short story took a new turn. Short-story writers like Bansi Nirdosh (b. 1929), H. K. Bharati (b. 1937), Taj Begam (b. 1931) and G. R. Santosh (b. 1929) wove local customs, creeds and colour into the fabric of their stories. Literary activities in the 1970s increased further and created a literary atmosphere conducive to the growth of prose in general and the short story in particular. Two trends could be seen in the contemporary short story. One trend was towards modernism in which the writers experimented with new forms. Iqbal Fahim's *Kunyzath* [The Lonely Self], Bharati's *Anigatichi topaz khanji* [Topaz Piece of Darkness], etc. are stories where the narrative art loses its strength on account of excessive symbolism and the use of vague metaphors. The other trend

³⁸ Such as Mir Ghulam Rasul Nazki (b. 1909), Arif Mirza (b. 1910), Ghulam Nabi Firaq (b. 1922), Santosh (b. 1929), Chamanlal Chaman (b. 1937), Ghulam Mohd Aajir (b. 1945), Rafiq Raaz (b. 1952), etc.

emphasized narrative art. *Myon aaftaab* [My Sun] by Akhtar, *Shithyomut siryi* [Frozen Sun] by Rahbar, *Halas chu rotul* [It is Dark Now] by H. K. Kaul, etc. represent this trend.

Kashmiri has a long tradition of folk dance-drama, which includes dialogue, music and dance. Literary drama started very late. Most of these plays were based on either Sanskrit sources, such as *Satich kahvat* [The Touchstone of Truth] (1929) by Nandlal Kaul (1870–1940) and *Bilvamangala* by Nilkanth Sharma (1888–1970), or Perso-Arabic sources such as *Shirin-Khusro* and *Laila-Majnu* by Ghulam Nabi ‘Dilsoz’, etc. The former had a Sanskritized style while the latter had a Persianized style. *Grisi sund gari* [The Household of a Peasant] by Mohi-ud-Din Hajini (b. 1917) is the first play in Kashmiri written on an original and realistic theme. A number of playwrights have contributed to the development of Kashmiri drama and a host of voluntary organizations and drama clubs have actively engaged in staging Kashmiri plays.

The novel in Kashmiri appeared very late. Akhtar Mohi-ud-Din’s *Dood ti dag* [Sickness and Pain] (1957) is the first novel in Kashmiri. Although successful, it lacked the necessary scope and depth of a true novel. *Gati manzi gaash* [Light amidst Darkness] by Muhammad Amin Kamil appeared a couple of years later and with this the novel in Kashmiri had truly arrived. ‘Ali Muhammad Lone’s novelette *Aas’ ti chhi insaan* [We, Too, are Human], *Mujrim* [The Accused] by Ghulam Nabi ‘Gauhar’ and *Mokajaar* and *Akh dore* by Bansi ‘Nirdosh’ are other contributions to this genre in Kashmiri literature.

Punjabi

In a highly charged atmosphere with a certain wounded sensibility born out of a linguistic dislocation, Punjabi had to struggle hard to assert its Sikh identity and emerge as a literary medium. The renaissance in Punjabi literature came at the end of the nineteenth century under the inspiration of the Singh Sabha movement among the Sikhs. The main objective of the movement was to establish a Sikh identity. Hence for Bhai Vir Singh (1872–1957), Punjabi became the natural medium of expression for achieving both a national and a linguistic identity. Bhai Vir Singh was chiefly responsible for elevating the Punjabi language to a literary level that it had never previously attained. His early life was devoted mainly to journalism and pamphleteering. He founded the weekly paper *Khalsa samacar* [News of the Khalsa] in Amritsar (1899). At the age of 26 he published his first novel, *Sundrii* (1898).

Although *Jyotirudae* (1882) is considered the first original Punjabi novel, *Sundrii* is the first novel in Punjabi written with a purpose.³⁹ Driven by the desire to pull the Sikh people

³⁹ Das, 1991, p. 289.

out of their stupor and stagnancy, Bhai Vir Singh extolled the courage and sacrifice of the Sikhs, their resistance against the tyranny of the Mughals and their role as protectors of the weak and the poor. Though the historical background of the novel is thin, the author succeeds in creating the illusion of a vanished era. Bhai Vir Singh wrote two more novels, *Bijay Singh* (1899) and *Satvant Singh* (1900). Together these three may be treated as a trilogy. He also wrote an epic poem, *Rana Surat Singh* (1905), and a play entitled *Raja Lakhdata Singh* (1910). Among his novels are *Kalgidur camathar* (1935), depicting the life of the seventeenth-century guru Gobind Singh, and *Guru Nanak camathar* [Stories of Guru Nanak] (1936), a two-volume biography of the founder of Sikhism. *Baba Naudh Singh* (1921) brought a shift in his stance: from presenting the glorious history of the Sikhs to portraying the harsh realities of the rural society of his time.

Apart from religious themes, even the vogue of the short poem starts with Bhai Vir Singh's body of poems published in three volumes entitled *Matak hulare* [Elegant Swings], *Lahran de haar* [Garlands of Waves] and *Bijlian de haar* [Garlands of Lightning]. He is known as the father of modern Punjabi poetry. His major poetic work is the epic popularly known as *Rana Surat Singh*. It was written over two years with a view to propagating the cardinal features of the Sikh religion. Steeped in the spiritual mysteries of the Sikh faith, this epic, an allegorical fantasy, handles realms beyond the physical. It was also the first time that free verse, called *sirkhandi chhand*, had been attempted in Punjabi poetry. The epic is the odyssey of a soul in the quest for self-knowledge, and it is claimed to have brought about a radical change in Punjabi poetry, lending it new dimensions, a new idiom and new possibilities of expression. The true modernity of *Rana Surat Singh* lies in its prosody, its metre and its imagery.

Both the struggle for freedom and the Sikh Gurdwara reform had an impact on Punjabi literature and consequently brought many poets with a modern consciousness to the forefront of poetic creativity. Prominent among them were Hira Singh Dard (1889–1964), Gurumukh Singh Musafir (1899–1976), etc. However, it was Mohan Singh 'Mahir' (1905–78) who broke away from traditional poetry in the mid-1930s.

Mohan Singh is considered to be the greatest Punjabi poet of recent times. He earned this distinction after writing his great epic, *Nankayan* [Life of Nanak] (1971). He introduced modernism to Punjabi poetry and experimented boldly with form, with Freudian and Marxian overtones, as is evident in his *Kasumbhara* [Red Oleanders] (1937) and *Adhvale* [Half-Way House] (1937). In *Kach sach* [Falsehood and Truth] (1945) he made the transition from the romantic to the socialist-progressive mode, which he continued to maintain in his Sahitya Akademi Award-winning book *Wadda vela* [Late Morning] (1958), and in *Avazan* [Voices] (1950) and *Jaya mir* [Victory of Peace] (1953). 'Mahir' died with a

deep commitment to ‘*Punjabiyaat*’ – the Punjabi identity. *Nankayan* is a commissioned work penned at the request of Punjab University to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Guru Nanak.

Another famous poet whose name is associated with that of Mohan Singh is Amrita Pritam (b. 1919) (see more on her below). Amrita Pritam and Mohan Singh are the most celebrated poets of Punjabi literature. The period immediately after independence, marred by the bloody partition, is rightfully known as the ‘Amrita Pritam–Mohan Singh era’ of Punjabi poetry. Pritam’s poetry is a wonderful blend of earthiness and the unfathomable depths of the psyche of a woman shackled by the small-town orthodox ideas in which she grew up – and who later becomes an emancipated woman who breaks free in cosmopolitan Lahore and then Delhi. Pritam’s immortal poem on the tragedy of partition, *Ajj akhan Waris Shah noo* [Waris Shah Today], has virtually become a legend and is sung with great pathos all over the Punjabi-speaking areas on both sides of the border. She received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1956 for her romantic, melancholy *Sunehura* [Messages] (1952). One of her collections, *Kaghar te kanvas* [Paper and Canvas] (1973), won her the prestigious Jnanpith Award in 1981.

Harbhajan Singh (b. 1920) embarked on his journey as a progressive aesthete in his *Lasan* [Weals] (1954) and *Adharaini* [Midnight] (1962) and went further in probing existentialist questions. This was evident in his Sahitya Akademi Award collections *Na dhupe ne chhaven* [Neither Sunshine nor Shade] (1967), *Sarak di safe te* [On the Page of the Road] and *Main jo bit gaya* [I, Who Am the Past].

Sohan Singh Misha (b. 1934) broke new ground by introducing sophisticated realism in his collections of poems such as *Chaurasta* [Crossroads] (1961), *Dastak* [Knock on the Door] (1966), etc.

Perhaps the most convincing achievement in Punjabi poetry after Mohan Singh has been the work of Shiv Kumar Batalvi (1936–73), known as the Keats of Punjabi poetry. Batalvi’s urban upbringing in a brahminical environment proved to be his greatest asset, which he exploited to the best of his poetic genius. It is a culture exclusive to Shiv Batalvi, among his peers. *Loona* (1965), Batalvi’s great play in verse, won him the Sahitya Akademi Award. In this play he gives a new interpretation to the legend of Pooran Bhagat. Batalvi’s conception and treatment of the story are unique and brilliant, wherein he identifies himself with the female character Loona and portrays the plight of the downtrodden Indian woman.

Jaswant Singh Neki (b. 1925), Pritam Singh Safeer, etc. are some poets of the middle generation who have poetic achievements to their credit. While Neki’s *Karuna di chhan ton magron* received the Sahitya Akademi Award for the year 1979, Safeer’s *Anik Bisthar*

received the award in 1983. Avtar Singh Pash and Surjit Pattar are some of the younger generation of poets who have already come to prominence as trend-setters.

Events following Operation Bluestar⁴⁰ generated some of the most grim and heart-rending poetry that could not even be matched by the tragedy of partition. Ajeet Cour (b. 1934), Prem Prakash, Waryam Singh Sandhu and Harbhajan Singh are some of the Punjabi writers and poets who have written highly perceptive short stories such as Ajeet Cour's *Na maaro* [Kill Not] and Harbhajan Singh's *Ki faujan da maan* [Forces Need not be Vain]. As is clear from the work of poets of the younger generation like Surjit Pattar, both partition and the aftermath of Operation Bluestar have taken a heavy toll on the literary landscape of Punjab. With the former, readers lost Waris Shah, the Muslim bard who created the immortal romance of *Heer Ranjha*; with the latter, readers would lose Shiv Kumar Batalvi, the Hindu lyricist who has captured the hearts of young and old with his enchanting Punjabi love songs.

An interesting feature of contemporary Punjabi poetry is the overwhelming participation of women writers like Manjit Tiwana, Pal Kaur, Ka Na Singh, Amar Jyoti, Kamal Ikarsi, Pritam Sandhu, etc. The female poets of this generation have departed significantly from the earlier generation in their more liberal treatment of man–woman relationships.

The novelists Mohan Singh Vaid (1881–1939) and Charan Singh Shaheed (1881–1935) came close on the heels of Bhai Vir Singh, followed by Amar Singh and Master Tara Singh (1885–1968). However, it was with Nanak Singh (1897–1973) that the Punjabi novel matured fully. A prolific writer, Nanak Singh has been called the father of the Punjabi novel. He made significant contributions to various literary genres. His greatest contribution to Punjabi fiction is its secularization. He depicted episodes from contemporary life, cloaked with a veil of romantic idealism. He made his mark in the literary world with his novel *Chitta lahu* (1932). *Pavitar papi* (1942) is considered to be his masterpiece. He deviates from the narrative pattern and uses flashbacks and the boomerang technique. Thus his novels have no beginning, middle or end. His great historical novel, *Ik mian do talwaran* [One Sheath and Two Swords] (1959), won him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1962.

Nanak Singh has influenced almost all Punjabi novelists in one way or the other, the most prominent being Jaswant Singh Kanwal,⁴¹ the realist Gurdial Singh (b. 1933)⁴² and Sohan Singh Sital, a traditionalist in form but modern in outlook.⁴³ Materialism predominates in the writings of Nanak Singh, Jaswant Singh Kanwal, Gurdial Singh and Sohan

⁴⁰ A political event that culminated in the state-sponsored army attack on the Golden Temple at Amritsar in 1984.

⁴¹ *Puranmashi* (1950), *Rup dhara* (1959), *Hani* (1961), *Lahu di lo* (1975) and *Manukhta* (1980).

⁴² *Marhi da diva* [A Lamp in the Cremation Ground] (1964), *Anhoe* (1967) and *Adh chanani raat* (1970).

⁴³ *Jug badal gaya* (1971).

Singh Sital, who saw fiction as a criticism of life. However, there were other types of novelists such as Surinder Singh Narula, Narendarpal Singh, Kartar Singh Duggal, Surjit Singh Sethi and Narinjan Tasnim, who regarded fiction not as a criticism of life but as a source of recreating the complexities of life. Narula is the harbinger of realism in the Punjabi novel; his first novel, *Peo puttar* (1946), proved to be a trend-setter.

The realistic and the psychological novel developed side by side in the work of Narendarpal Singh, who delighted in experimenting with new forms and new techniques. His *Punnya ke masaya* (1964) is a stream-of-consciousness novel depicting India's cultural background through the life story of a school-teacher. His *Sutardhar* (1979) is a prophecy about the future of humankind.

Kartar Singh Duggal (b. 1917) is a brilliant and a prolific Punjabi writer who has authored several novels, short stories, plays and poems. He remains unparalleled in Punjabi literature for having fictionalized landmark events in the contemporary history of India. Among his works is a celebrated trilogy covering a tumultuous and volatile period in Punjab.⁴⁴

Surjit Singh Sethi (generally known as an experimentalist) has also been a prolific writer. His fifth novel, *Ik khali payala* (1960), created a stir in literary circles as it was written in the form of an interior monologue. Here an attempt has been made to trace the inner void of a Roma, a symbol of the modern woman in search of her identity.

Hanera hon takk (1971) is a psychological novel by Narinjan Tasnim in which the stream-of-consciousness technique is used to catch the flux of time past and present at moments of heightened sensibility.

In Sant Singh Sekhon's novel *Lahu mitti* (1950), realism takes on a deeper hue. The novel tells the story of a peasant family whose members are uprooted as they go in search of new pastures during the digging of a canal. *Baba Aasman* (1971) also depicts the struggle of a peasant family. Sekhon believes that sociopolitico-economic factors are the real causes of the sufferings of the masses.

Amrita Pritam (mentioned above as a poet) is a prolific writer in several genres. *Doctor Dev*, her first novel, appeared in the late 1960s. With its publication, Pritam switched from writing poetry to prose. *Pinjar* [The Skeleton] (1970), her second novel, is one of her most powerful works, in which she provides an intensely poignant account of partition.⁴⁵ Pritam's prose has a distinct poetic and lyrical quality about it, which has endeared her not only to her Punjabi readers but also to her Hindi audience.

⁴⁴ *Hal muredan da* [The Plight of the Devotees], *Ab na bason eh gaon* [No More Will I Live in This Village] and *Jal ki pyaas na jaaye* [The Thirst for Water Never Dies].

⁴⁵ *Ik si Anita*, *Jeb katre*, *Unanja din*, etc. are some of her other novels.

Dalip Kaur Tiwana (b. 1935) is a prominent contemporary Punjabi novelist. Her works focus on the mindscape of the oppressed woman and the lowly position that society accords her. Another major theme running through her writings concerns naive rural folk and their suppressed ambitions and desires. Tragedy and irony are the hallmarks of her fiction. The complex inner duality of the female psyche is Tiwana's principal concern. By far her finest work is the novel *Langh gaye darya* [The Waters Flow down the Rivers] (1990).

The contemporary Punjabi novel is now a maelstrom of various trends. Baldev Singh (*Ann data*), Om Parkash Gaso (*Mitti da mull*, 1972), Ram Sarup Ankhil (*Sulagdi raat*, 1978; *Kotha Khara Singh*), Harnam Das Sehrai, Jagjit Brar, etc. are the pioneers in this field.

The rise of short-story writing coincided with the advent of the Punjabi press. However, in the absence of any model, these short-story writers adopted a Western framework for their subject matter. Nanak Singh, Gurbakhsh Singh, S. S. Charan Singh 'Shahid' and Sujjan Singh belong to the early age of the Punjabi short story. The technique of story writing improved with Kartar Singh Duggal, Mohinder Singh Sarna, etc. and certain dramatic elements and greater subtlety were introduced. A dramatization of events replaced the old story's narrative pattern. Control over the narration slipped out of the author's hands – 'Exit Author' became the watchword of this age.⁴⁶

The Punjabi short story is indebted to female writers like Amrita Pritam and Dalip Kaur Tiwana, who made enormous contributions in this field as well as in the other genres in which they wrote. Primarily a fiction writer, Ajeet Cour has nine collections of short stories and two novels to her credit. She received the Sahitya Akademi Award for her fine autobiographical work entitled *Khanabadosh* [The Gypsy] (1982). Her *Savian chidian* [Sea-Green Sparrows] is an anthology of short stories, in which some key episodes pertaining to her own life are discussed. Ajeet Cour enjoys a distinct position among the autobiographical writers in Punjabi.

It was with Ishwar Chand Nanda that modern Punjabi drama came into existence. *Dulhan* [The Bride] (1913) was Nanda's first one-act play, followed by *Baba Ram bhajani* (1914), *Jinn* (1932), etc. His better-known plays are *Subhadra* (1920), *Shami Shah*, etc.

Side by side with Nanda's realistic form ran the tradition which drew inspiration from classical Sanskrit drama, using the conventions of *mangalacharana*, *sutradhara*, etc. *Mundri-chhal* [Trick of the Ring] (1927) and *Damini* (1930) by Bawa Budh Singh, and *Puran Bhagat*, *Kunal* and *Savitri* by Brij Lal Shastri represent the traditional voice.

⁴⁶ Surinder Singh Narula, Surjit Singh Sethi, Balwant Gargi, Jaswant Singh Kanwal, Mohan Singh Diwana, Mohan Singh, Man Mohan Bawa (*Yodh naadd*) etc. are the stalwarts of other fields who have also contributed immensely to this genre.

Joshua Fazal Din from Lahore wrote *Munde damul* (1928), *Parbha* (1945), *Pati varta Kamla*, etc. for the edification of rural people. In *Pind de vairi* he gives a dramatic picture of how the peace of rural life is torn apart by petty enmities and grudges.

With the Progressive Writers Movement in 1936, a new social awareness among Punjabi playwrights emerged. Sant Singh Sekhon's plays *Chhe ghar* [Six Houses] (1941), *Bhavi kalakar* [The Artist] (1945), etc. portray the themes of social commitment and class struggle.

Balwant Gargi's plays are marked by his diverse style. His *Loha kut* [The Blacksmith] (1944) deals with the suppressed emotions of Shanti, wife of the blacksmith Kaku. His *Kesro* (1952) is a realistic comedy dealing with women's education. His *Sautan* [The Rival Wife] (1980) deals with the incestuous relationship of a mother, a son and a daughter. He also wrote several one-act plays, such as *Pattan di beri* [The Boat Woman] (1950), *Bebe* [The Matriarch] (1944) and *Chaku* [The Knife].

Ik siphar siphar [One Zero Twice] (1941), *Tin natak* [Three Plays] and *Sat natak* [Seven Plays] are one-act collections by Kartar Singh Duggal, while *Mitha pani* [Sweet Water], *Kob kan* [The Mountain Cutter] and *Diva bujh gaya* [The Lamp has Blown Out] are his full-length plays.

Although plays with a social theme and moral purpose have also been written by Gurdial Singh Phul, he has largely devoted himself to writing Sikh historical and religious plays such as *Jin sat palley hoe* [Those Who Possess the Truth] and *Apna mool pehchan* [Recognize Your Real Self].

Social comedies such as *Buhay baithi dhi* [Daughter at the Threshold], *Jutiyan da jora* [A Pair of Shoes] and *Murde da ration* [The Ration for the Corpse] have been written by Gurdial Singh Khosla.

Surjit Singh Sethi and Kapur Singh Ghuman have experimented with modern techniques in *Mard mard nahin, tivin tivin nahi* [Man is not Man, nor is Woman Woman] and *Putlighar* [The House of Puppets], respectively.

Sheila Bhattia is credited with having introduced opera in her plays such as *Heer-Ranjha* (1957), *Rukhe khet* [Dry Fields] and *Prithvi Raj Chauhan*. Gursaran Singh, Hardit Singh Sutantar Giani, Alam Jit and Gurcharan Singh Jasuja are some prominent playwrights who have experimented with the techniques and form of plays.

DALIT LITERATURE IN PUNJABI

In spite of the social-reformist movements, radical political movements and even the impact of Sufism through poets like Shaikh Farid and Bulle Shah, Punjabi society could never remain non-communal, classless and non-casteist. The existence of Dalits in Punjab as a

downtrodden section of society is a natural ground for the emergence of a Dalit trend in Punjabi literature as well.

In modern Punjabi literature, Principal Sujjan Singh is considered the harbinger of the Dalit voice. Santokh Singh Dhir and Gurdial Singh further consolidated the tradition set by Sujjan Singh. The impact of the Naxalite movement on Punjabi literature gave a further impetus to this trend. Writers like Prem Gorkhi (*Arjun Safedi Wala*), Kirpal Kazak, Attajeet (*Bathloo Chamar*), Nachhatar (*Baki da sach*), Bhura Singh Kaler (*Tutte pattee*), Lal Singh, etc. made their Dalit identity vibrant through their short stories.

Though Nanak Singh, Jaswant Singh Kanwal, Kartar Singh Duggal, Surinder Singh Narula, etc. gave space in their novels to depict the sufferings of Dalit life, the first real Dalit hero (Jagseer) emerged in Gurdial Singh's novel, *Marhi da diwa*. Sohan Singh Sital's novels *Tutan wala khuh* and *Jug badal gaya* also portray Dalit life in a very sympathetic manner. Gurcharan Singh Rao's *Mashalchi* is a powerful novel focusing on Dalit life.

Prem Gorkhi's *Gair hazir aadmi* [The Absent Person] (1994) is the first Dalit autobiography in Punjabi in which the painful and anguished life of a Dalit is presented in an artful and dramatic form.

Harcharan Singh has depicted many Dalit characters in his plays like *Ratta Salu*. Balwant Gargi has also captured the anguished reality of Dalit characters in his plays such as *Loha kutt*, *Kesro* and *Kanak di balli*.

Punjabi poetry presents the Dalit voice more vigorously. Quite a number of contemporary poets⁴⁷ representing Dalit sensibilities have made the Dalit trend in Punjabi poetry an established reality.

Sindhi

Although Sindhi belongs to an Indo-Aryan language family, it differs considerably from other Indo-Aryan languages of the subcontinent both in terms of sounds and grammar. For example, the presence of four unique implosive sounds as well as a set of pronominal suffixes for verbs, certain nouns and postpositions not only make Sindhi distinct from other cognate languages but also bring it close to Dardic (Kashmiri) and Iranian (Baluchi and Persian). Another unique feature of Sindhi is that, unlike most other North Indian languages, the short vowel in the word-final position is not only pronounced but also inflected for case.

⁴⁷ Among them are Lal Singh Dil, Gurdas Ram Aalam, Manjit Qadar, Sant Ram Udasi, Balbir Madhavpuri, Madan Vira and Dharam Kameana.

The mid-nineteenth century was important both for the growth and development of Sindhi language and literature and for the emergence of a Sindhi ethno-nationalist consciousness. Colonial rule in Sind was established in the mid-nineteenth century; Sindhi as an official vernacular was recognized by the British Government in 1851 and ‘its use in administration and record-keeping ... led to the subsequent standardization of the language ... orthography ... compilation of dictionaries, grammar ... literary histories and the introduction of printing and print media’.⁴⁸

Since Sindhi was not the language of administration, it lacked a uniform script. Hence multiple scripts were used which contributed to the consolidation of identities based on religion, caste and region.⁴⁹ For example, the Khojah community used the Khuwajiko (or Khojki) script, the Memans preferred to use the Memaniko script, the Hindus wrote in Devanagari, the Sikhs in Gurmukhi, etc. The recognition of Sindhi as an official vernacular brought order to a ‘chaotic’ scriptural plurality. Perso-Arabic and Devanagari were the two strong contenders. Political exigencies, however, favoured the Arabic script with modifications in 1852. Ultimately, half a century later, the modified Arabic script with 52 characters was adopted for use in the official domain in Sind.

The partition of the subcontinent sharpened the divide along religious lines in India and led to the emergence of three contending factions – one supporting the Devanagari script, the other lobbying for the Arabic script and the third one trying to re-establish a:

modified form of the old *Landa* (*Hatavanika*) commercial alphabet, claiming that it is related to the writing system of the ancient civilization of *Mohenjo Daro* and thus ... is the unique and authentic heritage of Sindh ... preserving ‘Sindhism’ and Sindhi identity.⁵⁰

Nineteenth-century Sindhi literature shows a discernible departure from the synthesizing tradition, which was the distinguishing feature of the preceding century’s littérateurs. For example, verse forms like *duha* (*doha*), *soratha*, *baro duho*, *tunveri duho*, etc. gave way to Persian poetic forms such as *qasida*, *masnavi*, *musaddas*, *rubai*, *ghazal*, etc. Political factors not only heightened the process of Persianization but also compelled the Sindhi literati to believe that it was only through the process of Persianization that the Turco-Persian *ashraf* (elite) would accept Sindhi, and that Sindhi would gain and flourish in the process.

Akhund Gul Mohammad ‘Gul’ (1809–56) was not only the first Sindhi poet to complete his *Diwan* in Sindhi but also the trend-setter of the Persianized poetic forms. Mir Hassan ‘Ali Khan ‘Hassan’ (1824–1909), Ghulam Mohammad Shah ‘Gada’ (1824–1900), Akhund

⁴⁸ Asani, 2004, p. 614.

⁴⁹ Asani, 2004.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 626.

Kasim ‘Sangi’ (1851–1924), Shamsuddin ‘Bulbul’ (1857–1919) and many others were composing Persianized forms in Sindhi. Among them, Sangi enjoys a significant position in Sindhi literature. He particularly excels in the *ghazal*. He was the leader of the ‘Sangi school of poetry’ and the entire period from 1881 to 1915 is popularly referred to as the ‘Sangi age’.⁵¹

Mirza Qaleech Beg (1853–1929) is a prominent name in Sindhi literature; he was a votary of the Sangi doctrine. His poetic collection, *Amulha manik* [Priceless Gem], and a host of other translations of Omar Khayyam are perfect examples of where the Persian poetic forms are used. Born in Hyderabad to a Turco-Caucasian family, Qaleech Beg devoted his life to enriching the Sindhi language and literature. He was a prolific translator, reputed for not having left a single book ‘that was not immediately converted into Sindhi’.⁵² He was also known as a perfect craftsman, ‘capable to apply every rhetorical device to his verses . . . to enrich his beloved Sindhi with as many forms as possible’.⁵³

The following quote aptly captures the essence of this versatile genius, known as the ‘doyen’ of modern Sindhi literature:

To fill the deep gap of Sindhi poetry and prose, he has deeply investigated the different books of both Eastern and Western poets and scholars, literati and excellent men, philosophers and mystics, gnostics and rationalists, has translated their prosaic and poetical jewels into fluent Sindhi, and has put them before us – and there is no subject or title upon which he has not turned his pen.⁵⁴

The close proximity with Persian, however, suffered on account of the changing political milieu. The early decades of the twentieth century witnessed the rise of nationalist and patriotic poets and ultimately the return of ‘the traditional Sindhi forms and themes of the early virtuosos’.⁵⁵ Kishinchand Tirathdas Khatri (d. 1947) spearheaded this movement and laid the foundations of the modern school of poetry. Shaikh Ayaz and several other important contemporary poets became members of this school. Their literary commitment was not confined to reviving the traditional Sindhi form. Even new forms, including free verse and the sonnet, were created. Some were modelled after European forms. Diwan Dayaram Gidumal’s (1857–1927) *Mana-ja-chahbooka* [Whips of the Mind], published in free verse, caused a ‘revolution in the taste of more thoughtful and aspiring Sindhi youth’.⁵⁶

European forms also provided a model for the creation of prose genres, which mostly focused on issues related to social reforms. Deeply influenced by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s

⁵¹ Allana, 1991, p. 28.

⁵² Schimmel, 1974, p. 29.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 30.

⁵⁴ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵⁵ Asani, 2004, p. 629.

⁵⁶ Ajwani, 1959, p. 268.

ideas, Khan Bahadur Hassan 'Ali Effandi made enormous efforts to improve education in his country. He established the Sindh Muhammadan Association in Sind, which in 1858 founded the *Sindh Madrassatul – Islam*. This period influenced the literary, social and political activities in Sind, and is also referred to as the period of Sindhi prose. Four prominent figures of this period on which the edifice of Sindhi prose rests are Diwan Kauromal Chandanmal (1844–1916), Mirza Qaleech Beg, Rishi Dayaram Gidumal (1857–1927) and Diwan Parmanad Mewaram (1865–1938).

Pako Pah (1865) by Diwan Kauromal Chandanmal, reverentially called the father of Sindhi prose, deals with the issue of women's education. Chandanmal also wrote dramas and translated books for children. His diction of *Samia-ja-Sloka* (1885) is another valuable contribution to Sindhi literature. His style is, however, influenced by his cultural background. *Dilaram* and *Laila-Majnu* are respectively the first novel and the first drama written in Sindhi by Qaleech Beg. His zeal for the improvement of female education is also noteworthy. *Zinat*, written in 1890 in Sindhi, is an important representative of the prose genre dealing with issues of women's education. It contains some points which 'are far more modern than most of the modernist approaches made half a century later'.⁵⁷

The early decades of the twentieth century also inspired many Hindu and Muslim short-story writers, poets and novelists like Mirza Nadir Beg, 'Usman 'Ali Ansari, Amarlal Hingorani, Asanand Mamtora, etc. to break away from the earlier reformist school. Influenced by European literature, they began to experiment with new subjects and 'carried a new style of telling a story'.⁵⁸

The boost received by the Sindhi language and modern Sindhi literature in the last half of the nineteenth century continued until the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. The tragedy of partition was a major setback as a considerable number of Sindhi writers who belonged to the Hindu middle class migrated to India in search of their new destiny. This state of literary atrophy did not, however, last very long. Thus, after the initial limbo, post-independence Sindhi literature soon recovered and re-established itself with added zeal and fervour. The theme of social reforms continued to engage the writers of the post-independence period.

The era of modernism gave birth to a new renaissance in 1946, with Shaikh Ayaz (1923–97) becoming its torch-bearer. He combined in himself all the varied trends of the day and contributed immensely towards the modern (progressive) school of poetry. In a graceful and polished style and powerful diction, he wrote of Sind's aspirations and predilections and soon emerged as the poetic conscience of his land. Well-versed in West-

⁵⁷ Schimmel, 1974, p. 30.

⁵⁸ Hiranandani, quoted in Allana, 1991, p. 66.

ern literature and equally at home in the Indo-Iranian ethos, prolific in output and with a variety of forms and themes at his command, Ayaz is the leading poet in the Sindhi language. His *Bhanvar bhoree akas* [Sky Humming with Black Bees] (1962) won him literary laurels, and to him also goes the credit of having rendered Shah Bhitai's *Risalo* into Urdu verse.⁵⁹

The Sindhi short story had entered a new phase of development in the 1940s, but suffered a setback with partition. The contemporary existential problems faced by Sind and Sindhis also attracted the interest of the modern Sindhi short-story writers. Together with Shaikh Ayaz, Jamal Abro, Ayaz Qadri and Ghulam Rabbani Agro marked a new turn in the short story with progressive and nationalistic trends, followed closely by Najam 'Abbasi, Hameed Sindhi and others. A fiery new generation appeared in the 1960s, taking the short story to a new and powerful phase of development.⁶⁰ It is around this period that resistance literatures were written: Amar Jaleel's *Sard Laash jo Safar* and Agha Salim's novelette *Oon dahi Dharti Roshan Hath* are two fine examples. Female Sindhi writers have also contributed much in this field, depicting the problems faced by the women of Sind.⁶¹ The scholar and critic Fahmida Husain has explored the relationship of literature with culture and society.

From the poet Narain Shyam (d. 1989) and the fiction writer Mohan Kalpana onwards, the development of Sindhi literature in India has followed a separate track. The romantic and progressive trends in Sindhi continued even after independence in India. Hence references to the human suffering that resulted from the uprooting of Sindhis from their soil can be seen in the Sindhi literature of post-independence India. Krishin Khatwani's novel *Yaad Hika Pyara ji* represents the romantic trend, and Narain Shyam is credited with having kept the trend of romantic poetry alive with collections like *Maak bhina raabela* [Jasmine Moist with Dew] and *Aachhinde laja maraan* [Sky of Offering]. Shyam has won considerable critical acclaim and he received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1970 for his collection, *Vari-a bharyo palaand* [Skirtful of Sand].

Progressive literature was in full bloom and flourished in all genres. Sundri Uttamchandani, A. J. Uttam, Gobind Malhi and Kirat Babani are some pioneers of the progressive trend. The unequal distribution of wealth by the capitalist class, social inequalities, the

⁵⁹ Other prominent poets of the post-independence school are Anwar Pirzado, Fatah Malik, Tanveer 'Abbasi, Bardo Sindhi, Shamsher-al-Hydari, Imdad Husain, Adal Soomro, Ayaz Gul, etc. Some well-known female poets of this school are Attiya Dawood, Roshan Mughal, Sultana Wakasi, Pushpa Walab, etc.

⁶⁰ With Amar Jaleel, Agha Salim, Nasim Kharal, Tariq Ashraf, 'Ali Baba, Siraj, Ghulam Nabi Mughal and others.

⁶¹ Some women short-story writers worthy of mention are Sameera Zareen, Iqbal Parveen Soomra, Rashida 'Hijab', Mahtab Mehboob, Tanveer Junejo and Noor-ul-Huda Shah.

exploitation of women, the injustice meted out to the working class, etc. are the dominant themes of Gobind Malhi's novels, *Zindagi-a ji Raah Te* and *Jeevan Saathi*. Uttamchandani has advocated the overthrow of age-old traditions and argued for Sindhi girls working side by side with their male counterparts in every walk of life in her novel *Kirandar Deewaroon*.

Around the late 1950s a neo-realist movement emerged, largely as a reaction against the progressives. Mohan Kalpana (a romantic and individualistic writer), Guno Samtaney (whose fiction comes under the neo-classical label) and Lal Pushp (whose fiction successfully depicts the 'stream of consciousness') spearheaded this movement. Many of Pushp's stories like *Hika sard diwar* [A Cold Wall] and *Time of Ennui*, and novels like *Huna je atam jo maut* [Death of His 'Self'] reflect the Freudian complex and a postmodern sensibility.

Anand Khemani, Ishwar Chander, Vishnu Bhatia, K. S. Balani, Harish Vaswani, Shyam Jaisinghani, Prem Akas, etc. are the 'new' writers of the postmodern period, representing both poetry and the novel. *November ji aakhrin raat*, a collection of short stories by Anand Khemani, turned him into a cult figure. His novel *Hika shakhsa ji vasna* [Lust of a Man] is a Gothic passion play with animastic overtones.

Several full-length and one-act plays have also been written in the post-independence period. Gobind Malhi and Prem Prakash have made an immense contribution to this genre.

The folk/bardic tradition, revolving around seven folk romances, has been the main source of inspiration for Sindhi poets and prose writers. Knowledge of these seven legends is an absolute necessity for an understanding of Sindhi literature. As Ajwani points out, 'the student of Sindhi literature will have an imperfect understanding of even twentieth-century Sindhi literature if he has no knowledge of these seven legends'.⁶² Akhund Lutufullah's (1842–1902) *Ghule-Khandan* and Diwan Sobhraj Daswani's *Sabha-jo-Singar* (1894) are prominent examples of the folk tradition.

Urdu

The period from 1857 to 1885 marks Urdu's transition from its medieval period to the modern. Politically, this period saw the gradual reconciliation of the Muslim community with a British education and culture. This was a time when the tensions between Indian languages occupied centre stage, the most prominent being the linguistic tension between Urdu and Hindi. The claim to occupy the space in Indian literary history has also been fraught with tension, struggle and politics (rather than academic studies), operating through the principle of exclusion. Urdu literary historiographers such as Azad and Hali largely excluded Hindu writers of Urdu from the Urdu canon despite the fact that a number of

⁶² Ajwani, 1970, pp. 40–1.

major Hindu literary figures writing in Urdu had existed in both the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus Daya Shankar Nasim, Ratan Nath Sarshar, Bishan Narain Abr, Jwala Prashad Barq, Lala Sri Ram, Brij Mohan Dattatrayah Kaifi, etc. are not names that the history of Urdu literature can afford to forget.⁶³

The novel had become the most popular literary genre in Urdu by 1885, when the Urdu-speaking community was faced with the challenge of adjusting to the mode of living introduced by the British. Ethics and morals became the natural concerns of the novelists of this period. Hence *Mirat-ul-uruus* [The Bride's Mirror] (1869),⁶⁴ an Urdu novel written by Nazir Ahmad (1836–1912), has an ethical component. It is didactic in nature and written with a definite purpose, primarily to rejuvenate the lapsed morals of the people. It portrays two female characters of opposite nature, one stupid and the other intelligent, each being punished or rewarded according to her deeds. Nazir Ahmad's *Banaat-un-nash* (1872) is the story of a Muslim girl, her initial failings and final transformation.

The year 1880 is memorable in the history of the Indian novel for introducing the tradition of the long novel. The year was marked by the publication of the first important Telugu novel by Viresalingam and *Fasana-e-Azad* [The Tale of Azad] by Pandit Ratan Nath Sarshar (1845–1903). Its publication represents the *daastaan* (historical narration) tradition in Urdu literature. It has been compared to *Don Quixote* (with some reservations) and the *Sir Roger de Coverly Papers*. The significant aspect of the structure of this novel is that it developed 'without the intervention of any European model'.⁶⁵

With the consolidation of the British position in India, a new search for identity gave birth to the historical novel. The new faces that emerged as powerful writers after 1885 were novelists such as 'Abdul Halim Sharar (1860–1926) and Mirza Muhammad Hadi 'Rusva' (1856–1931), and the poet Akbar Allahabadi (1846–1921). Sharar was one of the first novelists of his time; his *Firdaus-e-Barin* remains a delightful masterpiece. Rusva's writings were realistic portrayals of contemporary life, as is evident from his famous *Umrao Jan Ada* (1899), which depicts the life of a courtesan of Oudh before its annexion by the British.

Munshi Premchand (1880–1937) began his literary career as an Urdu novelist. He broadened the base and scope of the novel by introducing the peasantry as characters (*Gosha-e-aafiyat*, *Godaan*). Deeply rooted in the mores of rural life, Premchand's writings perfectly blended idealism and realism. Thus, instead of glorifying the past, he captured the reality of the present by portraying the existential problems and sufferings of the peasants,

⁶³ Faruqi, 2001.

⁶⁴ Tr. by G. E. Ward, 1903.

⁶⁵ Das, 1991, p. 212.

whom he could see as the future levers of power. With Premchand, ‘Urdu fiction became a product of the soil.’⁶⁶ Perhaps it is on account of this approach that Premchand differs from his contemporaries such as Sajjad Haider Yaldrum (1880–1943) and Niyaz Fatehpuri (1884–1969).

The romantic trend in the Urdu novel started with Niyaz Fatehpuri (*Shahaab kii sarguzesht; Shaair kaa anjaam*). It was followed by Qazi ‘Abdul Ghafar (*Laila ke Khutoot; Majnu kii dairy*), Hijab Imtiyaz ‘Ali, Majnoon Gorakhpuri, etc.

With the advent of the Progressive Writers Movement in 1936, a number of novelists emerged on the literary scene, the most prominent being Krishan Chander (*Shikast*), Rajinder Singh Bedi (*Ek chadar maili si*), Ismat Chughtai (*Terhi Lakeer*), Khwaja Ahmad Abbas (*Inqilab*), ‘Aziz Ahmad (*Aag*), Qurratulain Hyder (*Mere bhi sanamkhane; Aag ka dariya*), etc. *Aag ka dariya* [River of Fire], first published in Pakistan in 1960, is an enduring work of fiction presenting the entire panorama of Indian life in multiple scenes weaving past and present, which seem to flow seamlessly by.

Hayatullah Ansari’s five-volume *Lahu ke phool* occupies a significant position in Urdu literature. Not only does it stand outside the purview of the ‘progressives’, but it is also considered to be a work of a nationalistic tenor, narrating the story of the Indian freedom struggle from 1911 to 1947 and concluding with the first five-year-plan period (1951).⁶⁷

In Urdu, fictional writings, particularly prose romances and didactic narratives, have a long tradition. Translations from European languages provided an inspiration for the Urdu short story to emerge as a distinct literary form in the 1930s. The Urdu short story, in fact, was born with Premchand and in a very short time it grew to maturity, bringing into its ambit unexplored terrains of thought and sensibility. The short story received a tremendous boost from *Angarey* [Embers] (1932), an anthology of stories that included the writings of firebrand ‘progressives’ such as Sajjad Haider, Ahmad ‘Ali (of *Twilight in Delhi* fame), Rashid Jahan and Mahmuduzzafar. These stories amply demonstrated the power and potential of this genre to fight social evils and expose the decadent culture and hypocrisy of the society. They also prepared the ground for the emergence of other outstanding writers in Urdu.⁶⁸

Saadat Hasan Manto’s penetrating irony and poignant style have placed him at the forefront of literary realism. Rajinder Singh Bedi’s writings also reflect new trends.

⁶⁶ Kidwai, 1995, p. 152.

⁶⁷ Qazi ‘Abdus Sattar (*Shikast ki awaaz*), Jeelani Bano (*Aiwan-e-ghazal*), Alim Masrur (*Bahut der kar di*) and Wajida Tabassum (*Qisas*) are some other noteworthy novelists of the present time.

⁶⁸ Such as Rajinder Singh Bedi, Krishan Chander, Saadat Hassan Manto, Ismat Chughtai, Qurratulain Hyder, Intizar Husain, Upendra Nath Ashk, Sohail Azeemabadi, Akhtar Orainvi, Ram Lal, Surendra Prakash, etc.

His preoccupation with social-realist narrative ‘did not deter him from deviating from the traditional epistemological premises of cause and effect by bringing allegory, myths, archetypes and metaphors into play judiciously’.⁶⁹ Qurratulain Hyder’s writings opened new vistas for Urdu fiction. Her use of stream of consciousness facilitated the displacement of language, both in terms of time and space. Her epoch-making novel, *Aag ka dariya*, presents a cultural chronicle of the past with ‘imagistic perception’.

Urdu short stories in the mid-twentieth century emerged with a new commitment to modern sensibility and the Kafkaesque tradition. Surendra Prakash is the name associated with this change. He ‘fashioned a self-referential narrative which is the hallmark of post-modern fiction’⁷⁰ and was perhaps the first Urdu writer who sought to create ‘fiction upon fiction’ by recreating some of the famous characters of Premchand, Krishan Chander, etc. Abid Suhail is another prominent progressive short-story writer of this period. ‘Abdullah Husain’s literary craftsmanship introduced a completely new strategy of storytelling, which has a bearing on postmodern self-referential fiction. His novel *Udas naslen* has been a phenomenal success. Naiyer Masood falls into the same category. His writings, in line with the postmodern writers, offer an ‘apocryphal version of history’.⁷¹ So pervasive has been the impact of these authors that a large number of contemporary young short-story writers have retained the repute bestowed upon them by their predecessors.⁷²

The origins of modern Urdu prose can be found in the writings of Sir Syed. The prose literature of this period also displayed vigorous experimentation with form. Ghalib, who was one of the most distinguished prose writers of this period, wrote in both Persian and Urdu. His fame as a prose writer rests mainly on his letters, published in two separate books, *Uud-e-Hindi* (1868) and *Urdu-e-mualla* (1869).

Hali, Muhammad Husain Azad and Shibli Numani are the triad in Urdu literature who drew inspiration from Sir Syed. Hali’s most famous and popular work, *Musaddas-e-Hali*, was written in 1879. His *Munajat-e-Bewa* [A Widow’s Prayer] (1886), *Shakwa-e-Hind* [The Complaint to India] (1887) and *Chup ki daad* [In Praise of Silence] (1905) reflect his broad humanism and profound sympathy. He was the most respected poet and the foremost product of the Aligarh school. His *Hayat-e-Javed* [The Life of Sir Syed] was published in 1901.

⁶⁹ Kidwai, 1995, p. 153.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 154.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 155.

⁷² ‘Abdul Samad, Qamar Ahsan, Husain ul-Haq, Salahuddin Parwez, S. M. Ashraf, Paigham Afaqi, Ghazanfar, Tariq Chattari, etc. are among the noteworthy authors who frequently employed both traditional and modern story-telling techniques.

Munshi Durga Sahai Surur and Nadir 'Ali Khan (1912), who wrote patriotic poems, dominated the genre of Urdu poetry. According to Saksena, Muhammad Husain Azad 'is the founder of the new form of poetry which took the succeeding age by storm'.⁷³ After the advent of the British, a new style of poetry had emerged which had 'inwardness' as its distinctive feature. Modern poets of this period turned their gaze inwards and became more conscious of their egos, their own emotions. This inwardness introduced a rupture in literary activity and brought about innovations in literary traditions.

One such significant innovation within the Urdu literary tradition can be seen in the writings of Hali (1837–1914). With Hali, Urdu poetry emerged as an instrument of social reform and patriotism. *Madd-wa-jazr-e-Islam* [The Ebb and Flow of Islam], popularly known as *Musaddas-e-Halim*, was published in 1879. Considered to be Hali's masterpiece, it is acclaimed as a landmark in the history of Urdu literature. Hali's main contribution to Urdu literature was his exploitation of the poetic form, *musaddas*, and his predilection for social concerns.

Although at the beginning of the twentieth century Indian poetry was diverse in themes, attitudes and forms, patriotism was a dominant mood (as also in other literary genres). Syed Akbar Husain, better known as Akbar Allahabadi, was famous for his joviality and wit. He was critical of the Indian tendency to ape Western manners. His poetry discarded the 'shell of libertinism'⁷⁴ and acquired a new texture because of his humour and satire. He was a conservative, but not a religious bigot. He had no nostalgia for the distant past and did not sing of the glories of Islam. He used both humour and satire as his weapons to attack the trend of Westernization in Muslim society, the aping attitude of the young, and the hypocrisy of the politicians and theologians.

Akbar Allahabadi continued to dominate the Urdu literary scene until the emergence of Iqbal (1878–1938). *Bang-e-dira*, published in 1924, is the first collection of Iqbal's poems. His *Naya Shivala* and *Tarana-e-Hindi*, starting with the famous line:

Sare jahan se achha, Hindustan hamara.

The best in the world is our Hindustan.

are his famous nationalistic poems. Although the Swadeshi movement gave a tremendous boost to the growth of patriotism in literature, it had also sown discord between Hindus and Muslims. The question of Hindu–Muslim unity hence became more pronounced in literature. Iqbal was sensitive to this concern. His famous lines from *Tarana-e-Hindi* reflect his concern for nationalism and the aspiration for religious unity:

⁷³ Saksena, 1927, p. 222.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 229.

Mazhab nahin sikhata apas mein bair rakhna

Hindi hain ham watan hain Hindustan hamara.

Religion does not teach discord.

Indians are one; our country is India.

Though Iqbal wrote several nationalistic songs, his *Shikwaa* reflects his significant departure from the spirit of nationalism and provides a discordant note in the patriotic literature of twentieth-century India. In *Shikwaa*, Iqbal not only complains to God for His indifference to the Muslims, who the poet sees as the greatest sufferers at the present time despite their glorious past:

You tell us who were they who pulled down the gates of Khyber?

Who were they that reduced the city that was the pride of Caesar?

Fake gods that men had made, who did break and shatter?

Who routed infidels' armies and destroyed them with bloody slaughter?

Who put out and made cold the 'sacred' flame in Iran?

Who retold the story of the one God; Yazdan?

Shikwaa also reveals Iqbal's militant attitude towards Hindus:

Hind ke dair-nashino ko muslama kar de.

Convert to Islam India's millions who still in temples dwell.

In fact, *Shikwaa* has been regarded as the first manifesto of the two-nation theory.

In 1867, under the auspices of Anjuman-e-Punjab (in Lahore), Muhammad Husain Azad (1830–1910) and Altaf Husain Hali (1837–1914) founded the concept of the new Urdu poem and made a fervent plea for people to wean themselves away from Persian. They had seen that the West was having an inevitable impact on their society, and believed that poetry could no longer be written under the overwhelming influence of Persian. Their pleas, however, made little impact. It was only with the emergence of the Progressive Writers Movement in the 1930s that a new era in poetry was ushered in. Sajjad Zaheer, Mulk Raj Anand and Mohammad Deen Taseer – reflective youths of that generation – pondered over the role of literature in the changing world and prepared a manifesto for what came to be known as the Progressive Writers Movement. It was precisely at this moment of idealistic transition that Akhter Husain Raipuri published his book *Adab aur inquilab* (1934) in which he abandoned the classical tradition of Mir and Ghalib and made a passionate

case for Marxist thought in literature. Premchand's famous presidential address at the conference of the Progressive Writers Association in Lucknow (1936), during which he urged writers to 'change the standards of beauty', is a reminder of the overall plea for change.

Modernism continued to influence Urdu poetry in the 1930s. The 1940s and 1950s brought a new predicament for art and ideas. The 1960s sharpened the contours of modernism and the following decade saw it established firmly as a tradition. The establishment of modernism as a tradition in Urdu poetry may ideally be traced from N. M. Rashed, Miraji and Faiz Ahmad Faiz. The trio represents in the Urdu language what Eliot and the Symbolists do in English and French. They were poets of a high calibre whose language is startling, symbolic and original, and 'also cuts across all levels from street talk to academic discourse'.⁷⁵ Although Faiz believed in a progressive ideology, he was also aware of the exacting demands of art. He drew upon the Persian heritage, exploited the possibilities of Urdu and looked at the world around him with a rare sensitivity towards social responsibilities. Miraji drew upon oriental, American and French sources to give a metaphoric dimension to his eminently personal experiences.

Modernism in Urdu poetry was expressed in various ways, and after its introduction in the 1930s, it explored its own route. Majeed Amjad, Akhtarul Iman and Mukhtar Siddiqui treated their poems as delicate works of art. Their successors, Wazir Agha, Khalilur Rehman Azmi, Qazi Saleem, Ameer Hanfi, Balraj Komal and Mohammad Alvi, spoke in voices that were only remotely connected to progressive poetics. They harked back to the classical past, looked forward to English influences and carved out their own individual niche. The work of a number of other poets of high calibre⁷⁶ was similar to the stylistic and experiential variety of poets writing in English. While the poets from Pakistan drew upon the common sources of history and tradition, they reflected their own socio-political predicament, acquired their own terms of reference and spoke in new voices of anger and despair. The women poets of Pakistan, Kishwer Naheed, Fehmida Iyaz, Sara Shagufta and Azra 'Abbas, deserve special mention for their bold feminist stance.

The *ghazal* in Urdu has also undergone poetic innovations in both form and content. Cliché-ridden diction, hackneyed symbols, trite images and metaphysical and sentimental notions of love are giving way to new nuances of postmodern conviction. All kinds of contradictions, ambiguities and complexes are now absorbed in the *ghazal*. Shamsur Rahman Faruqi (1993), an eminent Urdu critic, has aptly captured this poetic innovation when he points out that:

⁷⁵ Kidwai, 1995, p. 158.

⁷⁶ Such as Kumar Pashi, Zubair Rizvi, Nida Fazli, Adil Mansoori, Shahryar and Waheed Akhtar in India, and Gilani Kamran, Abbas Ather, Saqi Farooqi, Iftekhar Jalib and Zahid Dar in Pakistan.

[The] modern Urdu *ghazal* has shown a much-needed irreverence towards traditional themes of *ghazal*. Now poets have also realized that both common and uncommon feelings can be lucidly expressed in a conversational style. The elasticity of *ghazal* has also been extended.⁷⁷

Postmodern traits can be discerned in the creations of a host of poets who are striving to create a ‘semiotic space’ in language. They are committed to a modern sensibility and have abandoned the worn-out themes and trite metaphors of the *ghazal*.⁷⁸ Their poetry is marked by the use of a ‘conversational style with emphasis on displacement of signifiers’.⁷⁹

The mid-nineteenth century also saw the emergence of (rather weak) poet-playwrights in Urdu like Agha Hashr Kashmiri (1880–1935), Abid Husain, Mohammad Mujib, Imtiyaz ‘Ali Taj (of *Anarkali* fame), etc.

After 1947, two events – partition and the Indo-Pakistan war of September 1965 – had major consequences for Urdu language and literature. The literary consequences of partition had become evident by 1957 with the publication of N. M. Rashid’s *Iran mein ajnabi* [A Stranger in Iran] and Faiz Ahmad Faiz’s *Zindan nama* [Prison Chronicle]. These two publications in the first decade after independence are considered to be representative of modernity (*jadidiyat*) in Urdu, which had started to counter the hegemonic sway of the left-dominated Progressive Writers Association. A sense of exile and dislocation, bereavement and nostalgia, were the staple themes of the lyrical poetry produced during this period. (For example, *Subh-e-azadi* [The Dawn of Freedom] by Faiz, etc.)

On the other hand, in narrative literature – novels and short stories – there was an immense preoccupation with ‘naturalistic documentation’,⁸⁰ be it Kushwant Singh’s English novel *Train to Pakistan* or the Urdu novels of Krishan Chander and Ramanand Sagar, namely *Ghaddar* [Traitor] and *Aur insan mar gaya* [And the Human Perished] or *Siyah hashye* [Black Margins] – the book of Manto’s partition sketches. Even short stories by Bedi (*Lajwanti*) and Manto (*Toba Tek Singh*, *Khol do*) reveal a preoccupation with documenting the process of dislocation and visceral suffering. The post-independence society also witnessed a definite shaping of the genre of prose fiction within a broadened framework – ‘not just the condensed moment of partition itself, but the larger processes of pre- and post-partition social configuration’.⁸¹ Hayatullah Ansari’s five-volume novel *Lahoo ke phool* [Blood Blossoms], Shaukat Siddiqui’s *Khuda ki basti* [God’s Hamlet], Intizar

⁷⁷ Faruqi, 1993, p. 302.

⁷⁸ See, for example, the work of Shahryar, Irfan Siddiqui, Ishrat Zafar, Waali Asi, Amber Bahraichi, Farhat Ehsas, Manzoor Hashmi and Hehtab Haider Naqvi.

⁷⁹ Kidwai, 1995, p. 159.

⁸⁰ Ahmad, 1993, p. 4.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Husain's *Din aur dastan* and Qurratulain Hyder's *Housing Society* and *Chai ke bagh* [Tea Estates] are naturalistic and detailed depictions of the pre- and post-partition eras.

Amidst scores of novels produced during this decade, perhaps Qurratulain Hyder's *Aag ka dariya* [River of Fire], Khadeeja Mastoor's *Aangan* [Courtyard] and 'Abdullah Husain's *Udas naslein* [Generations of Grief] have been the most influential. Urdu writers, especially poets from both India and Pakistan, responded to the war. Special war numbers⁸² of a host of magazines from India and Pakistan can be seen as sources for examining these responses. However, qualitative differences can be discerned in the nature of the responses between the writers of the two countries.⁸³

⁸² For example, *Pairahan-e-Sharar* (Bombay, 1966) by 'Ali Sirdar Ja'fari; *Lahu-tarang* (Patiala, 1966) by Naubahar Sabir; and *Gulbaang-e-jihad* (Lahore, 1965).

⁸³ Naim, 2004.