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# The Craft of Manto: Warts and All[1]

Knowing how easily hagiography comes to us, and how nonchalantly we take to adulation—like *qāz* (duck) and *murghābī* (water fowl) to water—I propose to take a wry and a rather astringent look at Sa'adat Hasan Manto. Hagiography, let me hasten to add, would be the wrong term to apply to an unbelieving, hard-drinking rationalist like Manto. His claim to literary apostlehood is understandable. But an attempt needs to be made to balance things out: between his cynicism and the sentimentality that still creeps in; the down to earth story let down by the lack of all sense of place; the obsession with Partition that ignored the political movements that led to it; the uncertain landing after an imaginative leap.

But before we take these up, the essentials need to be put down. Manto's commitment to truth was so passionate and complete that it has to go unchallenged. His worst enemies can't accuse him of sectarianism. And he was totally unselfconscious about his impartiality between Hindu and Muslim—there was no deliberate matching of Sikh atrocity with Muslim atrocity in order to arrive at some phony balance. He was above such obvious artifice. His heart was in the right place invariably, and his

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[1]This paper is based exclusively on translated Manto texts which appear in the collections: *The Life and Works of Saadat Hasan Manto* (translations by Tahira Naqvi; Introduction by Leslie A. Flemming; Lahore: Vanguard Books Ltd., 1985); *Kingdom's End and Other Stories* (translated by Khalid Hasan; London: Verso Publishers, 1987); and *The Best of Manto: A Collection of his Short Stories* (edited and translated by Jai Ratan; Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1989). (Henceforward all references to these works appear in the text, identified, respectively, as: *LWS*, *KE,* and *BM.*) While one has great respect for the translators, most Urdu scholars aver that these translations are just about adequate, and at times do not do justice to the richness and resonance of the original texts [e.g., cf. M. Asaduddin, "Manto Flattened," which follows this paper —*Eds.*].

scorn for the hypocritical and the sanctimonious was unmitigated. And he made the fanatics look not only evil, but also foolish. His social realism has been much talked about. In fact his entire oeuvre fits so snugly into the slot that one can't even think of putting a different tag on it.

And yet when he lets his hair down, as in "Siyāh Ḥāshiyē" ("Black Marginalia"; *BM*, pp. 39–51), he can surprise you with the reach of his imagination and the heights it could scale. "Siyāh Ḥāshiyē" could pass as "existential belle letters," as such pieces were once called in the US. The half-page vignette "Fifṭī-Fifṭī"("Fifty-Fifty"; *BM*, pp. 43–44) shows Manto taking an imaginative leap that would put him at par with the most new-fangled of the moderns. It is a surreal story about a man spotting a big wooden box, presumably in a riot. Since he can't lift it alone, he asks for help, and he and his helper take it to a safe place and fight over the supposed booty. The man wants to give the helper only one-fourth. The other wants to split it fifty-fifty. Then they open the box and a man comes out of it. "He was holding a sword in his hand and he immediately cut the two men into halves, fifty-fifty." This piece is worthy of a Borges or a Cortazar.

Manto rose to fame due to the brilliance, the uniqueness of his vision and the controversial nature of his writing. The Indian middle class, ever prone to a mix of prudishness and hypocrisy in the thirties and forties was shocked out of its wits. And Manto, of course, reveled in whatever shocked them, be it "obscenity" or sudden violence, or the dramatic and brutal manner with which he unmasked hypocrisy. It appears he spent a literary lifetime reveling in his role as the *enfant terrible* of Urdu literature. And there was, of course, the love-hate relationship with the Progressive Writers' Association. In 1933 four young writers, namely Sajjad Zahir, Ahmed Ali, Rashid Jahan and Mahmuduzzafar, "all of whom were dissatisfied with the mildly reformist approach to fiction of Prem Chand and his followers, and all of whom were ultimately involved in the Progressive Writers' Movement, brought out together an electrifying collection of short stories entitled *Aṅgārē* (Live Coals)" (Flemming, *LWM*, p. 24). The stories "were consciously revolutionary, openly ridiculing religion and suggesting the oppressiveness of traditional and social institutions, especially those relating to women" (*ibid.*).

Meanwhile in London, in November 1934, some Indian students, led by Mulk Raj Anand and Sajjad Zahir, moved by the anti-fascist activity of European writers, had organized the Indian Progressive Writers' Association. Later, Sajjad Zahir and Ahmed Ali established the All India Progressive Writers' Association, holding its first meeting in Lucknow in

April 1936, a meeting presided over by Permchand. As Leslie Flemming shows, both the manifestoes issued in London in 1935 and Lucknow in 1936, espoused (a) nationalism, and (b) literature as a force for social uplift in India. The Lucknow manifesto stated: "We want the new literature of India to make its subject the fundamental problems of our lives. These are the problems of hunger, poverty, social backwardness and slavery" (*ibid.,* p. 25). The first issue of *Nayā Adab* (New Literature; April 1939) defined progressive literature as follows: "In our opinion progressive literature is that literature which looks at the realities of life, reflects them, investigates them and leads the way toward a new and better life…" (*ibid.*).

The Russian influence on Manto is well known. After all, he started his literary career as a translator of Russian stories. Thus the crucible in which his writing was cast was mainly influenced by the French realists—Maupassant and Balzac—and the Russian writers from Tolstoy to Gorky.

The critical attention he received was directed towards his sensational stories like "Bū" ("Odour"; *BM*, pp. 153–58) and "Ṭʰanḍā Gōsht" (Cold Meat, tr. as "Colder than Ice"; in *KE*, pp. 119–24), due to which (and other reasons as well) he fell out with the Progressives. Thus the critical attention was directed to the more virulent and shocking aspects of his writing, the sudden violence and the seamy side of life that he portrayed, especially of the demimonde. The Partition stories also took their fair share of critical attention. The characters that peppered his stories were out of the ordinary, often coming from the detritus of society. The whore, the pimp, the street bully (*dādā*) jostled for place with those who fought for freedom. And there were, of course, the religious bigots, both Hindu and Muslim, whom he reviled. His characters thus acted as magnets for criticism, both for and against. Themes such as the loss of innocence (but not of grace) attracted the critics. And later, so did his vision—terrifying and nihilistic, yet moral in its own unique way. His stories on Partition and on prostitutes had a riveting political and social relevance. If his craft attracted the critic's eye, it was more in passing. It is this aspect which I propose to take up.

Manto wrote the classical short story: directed to a purpose, with a well-fleshed middle and a definite ending. Characterization played an important part.

The modern short story—which can be just the presentation of a mood, or a sense of loss; where the ending, such as there is, is left hanging in the air like a wisp of mist in the mountains; where the past of the character does not have to be delineated—had not caught up with Manto as

yet.

Looking at the plot structure of many of his stories one notices the flaws—the vagueness in regard to detail, the predetermined end, at times the overdose of melodrama perhaps unconsciously imbibed through his association with the film world. Sometimes even normal logic is not adhered to, and hence verisimilitude becomes a victim. One gets the impression that events are being channelized pell-mell, with sometimes no regard to their verisemblance to a pre-ordained end. The fates decree, as it were, and the furies drag the story by the hair to the guillotine.

"Swarāj kē liyē" ("The Price of Freedom"; *KE*, pp. 57–73) is a story about two ardent young Congressites, Shahzada Ghulam Ali and Nigar, who fall in love. The story is set in Amritsar quite a few years after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Ghulam Ali makes a name as a fiery young Congress worker. Every few days a "dictator" is appointed to the Congress camp and Ghulam Ali is the fortieth "dictator" to take over, since his predecessors have all been sent to prison. In this position one does not last for more than a few days before being sent to jail. The scene is set. Post-Jallianwala-Bagh-Amritsar and two fervent Muslim Congress workers. Then enters the Baba. He heads an *āshram* and carries a halo about him. All political movements in Amritsar take place only with his blessings. One is not left guessing about what Manto thinks of *āshrams*. "I had seen many Ashram inmates in my time. There was something lifeless and pallid about them, despite their early morning cold bath and long walks. With their pale faces and swollen eyes, they somehow always reminded me of cow's udders" (p. 65) To a full-blooded man like Manto, this is how an *āshram*-ite would appear.

The artifice creeps in when it is the Baba who joins Ghulam and Nigar in wedlock. How a Hindu Baba, heading an *āshram*, joins two Muslims in marriage is never explained, perhaps because it is not explicable. The Baba asks Nigar to join the *āshram* and makes a long speech at the wedding, where he states that the sexual link was not as important as it was made out to be in a marriage. A true marriage should be free of lust, he says. "The sanctity of marriage is more important than the gratification of the sexual instinct" (p. 67). All this stirs Ghulam Ali who states, trembling with emotion, "I have a declaration to make. As long as India does not win freedom, I and Nigar will live not as husband and wife but as friends" (*ibid.*). He asks Nigar if she would like to mother a child who would be a slave at the moment of his birth. She wouldn't. After marriage Ghulam Ali is bundled off to jail for eight months. After he returns they obviously live together, but in sexual abstinence. The return to conven-

tional life is hum-drum and boring, compared to the excitement of their days with the Congress. Many years later, the narrator meets Ghulam Ali and finds that he is now doing well and owns some shoe stores. However, he does not stock rubber footwear. Ghulam Ali hates rubber, the reason being the use of condoms which he and Nigar resorted to in order to keep their vow to the Baba that he would not father a child in an enslaved India. Later he gives up condoms and has children, but the bitter antipathy against rubbers lingers. The story ends with his child coming into the shop with a balloon, and Ghulam Ali, in a tantrum, pouncing on the balloon and bursting it and throwing the ugly rubber out of the shop.

The story reflects detailed—almost blow-by-blow—plotting, and also displays Manto's cockiness, which seems to declare that he can carry off almost anything. But the basic flaw in the story remains—the Baba being substituted for the Qazi. A Hindu Baba was perhaps needed because he had to talk about freedom and perhaps hint at sexual abstinence. This is one thing a Qazi won't do at a *nikāh.* Manto's distrust of *āshrams* also comes through when he talks about Nigar joining the *āshram*. "Why should she, who was herself pure as a prayer, raise her hands to heaven?" (p. 65). The ending of course is superb (the child's balloon being pricked), but one can't forget the flaw in the story—the Hindu Baba marrying two Muslims and preaching sexual abstinence in the bargain. There is critical speculation to the effect that the Baba really stands for Gandhi-ji. He is held in great respect and his views are similar to Gandhi's. All one can say here is that if Manto had to induct Gandhi into the story, he should have managed it with greater finesse.

Another trait of Manto's is the total lack of any local detail whatsoever. His sense of geographical space was vague and undefined. He was born in Amritsar, yet the only reference you get in his stories based in Amritsar is possibly Jallianwala Bagh. *Kūča* and *galī,* lane and *muḥalla,* street and road—everything is nameless, paved with anonymity. What does this reveal? Either he was too impatient to plot and work out an idea carefully (which would have meant visually capturing an area and putting in the details—all of which can get a little tedious for the writer, and certainly for impatient genius), or we must concede that he was too arrogant to bother about such detail as names and places. Worse still, he may have even thought that this was not necessary.

For me, setting the scene is very important. Either you create a place out of your imagination and fill in the detail as you wish (which can be very exciting at least to start with), or you research and stick to detail. Manto does neither and that's a pity. The reader loses out on both

authenticity and local flavor. If he thought that all that there was to a short story was to work out an idea, then he did poor service to his craft and his art.

His Jews, Anglo-Indians, Christians and Parsis are stereotyped and two-dimensional. Take "Mozail (*KE*, pp. 97–111)," a story set in Bombay about a Jewish woman (the eponymous Mozail) and Sardar Tarlochan Singh, who falls in, and then out of, love with her. And there is Karpal Kaur whom Tarlochan finally falls in love with and whom Mozail saves. Now, Manto lived for years in Bombay. You could have expected some detail. At the height of the riots, Mozail, clad simply in a caftan, sets out with Tarlochan to rescue Karpal Kaur. Not one place is ever named, as if Manto were writing in a nameless limbo. Karpal Kaur lives in a neighborhood (*muḥalla*) with her blind mother and crippled father. Her brother Naranjan "lived in another suburb" (p. 98). Mozail works "in one of the big department stores in the Fort area" (p. 103). Here at least he pinpoints something. When the two set out to save Karpal, who lives in a Muslim locality, this is how he describes it: "They came to a street which led to the mohalla where Karpal Kaur lived" (p. 109). Now if that's all the local flavor you need, then someone sitting in Bhikiwind could write a story about a Warsaw ghetto during the Nazi occupation.

Except for Mozail, the other characters are two-dimensional and lifeless. Mozail's end is heroic and bloody, and the other characters seem to be there to provide a chance for her to carry her part through. It could be said that "Mozail" was Manto's answer to the general denigration of and onslaught against the Jews. But this would be far-fetched.

There is a terrifying image at the end—three gunny sacks dripping blood (*ibid.*). And there is humor. When Tarlochan Singh kisses Mozail on the lips for the first and only time, she pushes him away, saying, "Phew! … I brushed my teeth this morning. You don't have to bother" (p. 101). Manto's intentions are transparent. Here he sets out to prove that this scantily clad Jewish woman who is free with her love, is bolder and a better person than the rest of the characters put together.

Manto's sympathies with the waifs and strays of our society are obvious. At times a surge of compassion seems to spark off a story. Some of those are unsuccessful. His heart is in the right place and he writes against the male's exploitation of the wife, the woman, the prostitute. But strong feeling does not necessarily make for strong art.

Take one of the worst examples of Manto's writing—at least as he comes out sieved through translation. The story I refer to is "Saṛak kē Kinārē" ("By the Roadside"; *KE*, pp. 231–36). It starts as follows:

> Yes, it was this time of year. The sky had a washed blue look like his eyes. The sun was mild like a joyous dream. The fragrance from the earth had risen to my heart, enveloping my being. And, lying next to him, I had made him an offering of my throbbing soul.
>
> He had said to me: "You have given me what my life had always lacked. These magic moments that you have allowed me to share have filled a void in my being. My life would have remained an emptiness without your love, something incomplete. I do not know what to say to you and how, but today I have been made whole. I am fulfilled. Perhaps I no longer need you".
>
> And he had left, never to come back. (p. 231)

Now this is as bad a start as you can ever get. Nothing is defined. There are clichés like "The sun was mild like a joyous dream," which perhaps hints at an early winter sun. Were they living in a house, a *kholī,* a *chawl?* What had the fellow walked out of? And where had the bugger gone? To war? To the high seas? To the next *kōṭʰā?*

The dialogue is as phony as it can get. "He had said 'these moments we have shared have filled my emptiness. The atoms of your being have made me complete. Our relationship has come to its preordained end' " (*ibid.*). Firstly, no one talks like this. Secondly, there is no logical nexus between his having become "complete" through "the atoms of her being" and their relationship's coming to an end.

She protests. He answers: "The honey which bees suck from half opened flowers can never adorn the flowers or sweeten their bitterness" (p. 232). This is worse than some third-rate serial on Zee TV or Doordarshan.

The story is supposedly written by a woman who is betrayed—or rather, deserted—by her man. But there isn't a single feminine touch to the writing. In fact Manto loses his concentration, as in the following passage: "A woman can weep; she cannot argue. Her supreme argument are [*sic*] the tears which spring from her eyes" (*ibid.*). This is not how a woman would write. This is exactly how a male from Punjab would write.

Worse follows. When the man is about to go she says, "If you must leave, I cannot hold you back, but wrap these tears in the shroud of your handkerchief and take them away and bury them somewhere, because when I cry again, I would know that you once performed the last rites of love" (*ibid.*). This is Manto's compassion getting mixed up with sentimentality at its worst.

The story "Saṛak kē Kinārē" is about a man who walks out on his woman perhaps without realizing that she is pregnant. It ends with a postscript:

> The police have found a new-born baby by the roadside. Its naked body had been wrapped in wet linen with the obvious intention that it should die of cold and exposure. However, the baby was alive and has been taken to hospital. It has pretty blue eyes. (p. 236)

Here the end seems premeditated. Manto seems to have worked backwards. Whatever precedes the end has been put together in slam-bang fashion to ensure the surprise ending, if it can be called a surprise. A short story needs a lot of staff work, as we say in bureaucratic parlance. A lot of details have to be filled in to set the scene, and get it right. Manto's staff work often failed him.

I must, however, add that Urdu scholars tell me that this is one story where Manto completely veered away from his usual style. The style is remarkable for its high-pitched lyricism, and the story could almost be taken as a prose poem if we allow our imaginations some liberty. But in translation the lyricism does not come through.

Melodrama creeps in often, for instance in "Ṭʰanḍā Gōsht" ("Colder than Ice"; *KE*, pp. 119–24), where Kalwant Kaur finds her rioting lover, Ishwar Singh, unable to perform in bed. His foreplay turns her on. "Ishr Sian, you have shuffled me enough, it's time to produce your trump" (p. 122), she says languidly. He tells her why he can't. He had slaughtered six members of a family with his *kirpān,* and the seventh, a beautiful woman, he carried away only to discover during the sex act that she was already dead. Here the bizarre and the melodramatic dovetail with each other as Ishwar Singh withdraws from or consummates necrophilic sex. Kalwant Kaur had already stabbed him in a fit of jealous rage even before he had made his near-necrophilic confession. The story was dramatic enough, as it is. That final dagger-thrust was unnecessary. Why should she stab him at all? Why must sexual death be duplicated by physical death or hurt?

There are occasions when Manto does not seem to know when to stop. The story "Khudā kī Qasam" ("I Swear by God"; *BM*, pp. 102–07) is told by a liaison officer who supervises the recovery of abducted women, and so comes to India often. In Jalundhur he notices a near-mad Muslim woman in dire straits searching desperately for her missing daughter. The officer, for some reason, tries to convince the old unkempt woman that her daughter is dead. He hopes thereby to facilitate her return to

Pakistan. The woman retorts that no one could kill her daughter because she is so beautiful. So beautiful that no one could dream of even lifting a hand against her.

Then, on one of his trips, the liaison officer sees the old woman at the Farid Ka Chowk in Amritsar, still searching for her daughter. He wants to persuade her to accompany him to Pakistan. As he crosses the road to talk to her, he notices a couple passing by. "The woman's face was covered with a short veil. The man accompanying her was a young Sikh, very robust and handsome…" (p. 106). The Sikh recognizes her mother and points her out to the woman. She lifts her veil to take a look at the old woman and the liaison officer sees her "exquisitively [*sic*] beautiful, rosy face framed within her white *chaddar*" (p. 107).

"Your mother," the Sikh tells her. But her daughter squeezes his arm and says "let's go" (*ibid.*). The mother recognizes her and cries out to the officer that she has seen her daughter. Seeing how she has been ignored by the daughter he tries to convince her that her daughter is dead. "I swear by God she's dead," he says. "Hearing this the woman fell in a heap on the ground" (*ibid.*).

Now, that last bit is unnecessary. The agony of it all had been brought out through the beautiful daughter spurning her mad mother who has been brought to this state by the endless search for her daughter. Why does Manto have to wring out more pathos by killing the poor woman at the end? The story does symbolize the death of relationships, as Leslie A. Flemming avers (*LWM* p. 82). But the relationship is already dead when the daughter turns her face from the mother. It is her collapse which is unnecessary. She would have become an even more tragic figure if she had wandered around like a ghost, looking for her daughter. Physical death, in any case, was not a scarce commodity in the partition of India. It was all around.

And one feels quite petty in pointing out one odd detail. No Muslim woman would have dared wear a veil in Amritsar in March 1948. (Firstly, there were no Muslims women in Amritsar by 1948.) The veil would have attracted hooligans. It would have also been an open invitation to the police to seize her and deport her to Pakistan. No *burqas* were seen in East Punjab in 1948.

Yet Manto's compassion is palpable throughout the story, which starts with a general discourse on the fate of abducted women on both sides of the new border. Manto works himself into a passion when he thinks of raped women now big with child.

> Who would be the owner of what lay inside these stomachs? Pakistan or India? … And who would bear the responsibility of these nine months' travail? Pakistan or India? Will all this be duly recorded in the account books of man's inhumanity or nature's callousness? But was there any page still left blank to make more entries? (p. 103)

There is passion here, and compassion, and the wrenching exposure of filial indifference and ingratitude. And yet the death of the old mother was not necessary.

The surprise has to be left till the very end, of course, and in his bid to shock there is a sudden eruption of violence and death at the end of the tale. In "Sau Kainḍal Pāvar kā Balb" (A Hundred Candle Power Bulb), a prostitute who is kept working overtime by her pimp, and hence is unable to sleep, smashes his head with a stone and then snores away peacefully. The ending in "Mozail" is in keeping with the heroic endings of our Bombay films. The thing to note is that violence is often used by Manto to round off a story effectively.

A question which perhaps has not been probed is the insularity one encounters in Manto. Politically, he hardly ever reaches beyond Jinnah and Gandhi, Jallianwala Bagh and Partition. He lived in momentous times—the Spanish Civil War, the Great War, the rise of fascism, the Jewish holocaust. They were times of doctrinal wars—Nazism and Fascism versus Communism. And the democracies had of course taken all three of them on. He worked for a time with All India Radio, and so should have been sensitive to events on the world stage. For instance, Iqbal was alive to every global cross-current. But in Manto's corpus there is hardly any such mention, as if the doors of his mind were closed to what was happening in Europe or Asia or North Africa.

This is not strictly true. As shown in his "Čačā Sām kē Nām Khaṭ" (Letter to Uncle Sam)[2], or in his letter on Kashmir,[3] Manto was very alive and sensitive to political currents. But unless they referred to either the freedom struggle or to the Subcontinent, or to the stupidity of Partition,

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[2]Manto wrote 9 separate letters to Uncle Sam, for which see his *Manṭōrāmā* (Lahore: Sang-e Mīl Pablīkēshanz, 1990), pp. 356–63, 370–75, 383–88, 393–97, 401–07, 415, 416–22, 432–39, and 440–47. [—*Eds.*]

[3]See "Pundit Manto's First Letter to Pundit Nehru" elsewhere in this section. [—*Eds.*]

they never made an appearance in his fiction.

Secondly, the Lahore Resolution on the formation of Pakistan was passed by the Muslim League in 1940. Surely Manto must have seen the writing on the wall. A sensitive person, as all good writers are supposed to be, was expected to see what this would lead to. For instance, English poetry of the thirties broods all along and is sprayed with premonitions of the coming war. But Manto, in his stories written right till 1946, seems oblivious of things to come, as if he never sensed or saw the shadow advancing over the Indian subcontinent.

And yet there are stories where he transcends it all. "Hatak" ("Slight"; *BM*, pp. 24–38) is an absolute shocker, where Sugandhi, after driving out her worthless lover, Madho, lies down in her bed with her mangy dog. Though the last half of the story moves on an emotional high, it can never be called melodramatic. The story builds its own explosive dynamism as it goes along. Sugandhi moves from passivity to action. The end is nihilistic as Sugandhi ends up in utter moral despair. A note of despair is also struck in regard to human relationships. And Manto has been very careful about his craft. The detail has been filled in meticulously. Take this description of Sugandhi's room:

> In one corner of the room on a wooden bracket lay her cosmetics—rouge for her cheeks, red lipstick, face powder, combs, metal hairpins. A parrot lay asleep in a cage hanging from a long peg, its neck hidden in the plumage on its back. Pieces of raw guava and rotten orange peels lay scattered inside the cage, mosquitoes and moths hovering over them. Near the bed stood a cane chair, its back soiled by the oily heads constantly resting against it. By the side of the chair rested a beautiful teapoy on which lay a portable gramophone, covered with a tattered piece of black cloth and used gramophone needles lay scattered all over the floor. Right above the gramophone hung four framed photographs. A little apart from these photographs, facing the door hung a glossy picture of Lord Ganesha, almost hidden under a layer of fresh and dry flowers. The picture had been peeled off from a bale of cotton cloth and framed. Near the picture was a small alcove in which was kept a cup of oil and a small clay lamp. In the stuffy, airless room the flame of the lamp stood up straight like a sandal paste mark on a devotee's forehead. Ashen residues of burnt joss-sticks lay curled on a wooden bracket. (p. 25)

This is Manto at his best—the mind keen and alert and carrying on a dialogue with the surroundings, as it were.

"Sirāj" (name of the protagonist; *KE*, pp. 161–69) is the story of a betrayed woman who finds herself in a whorehouse after the man she eloped with walked out on her. She comes to Bombay, and despite her "profession" keeps her virginity intact. Then she goes back to search for her betrayer, who feels terribly repentant. But at night, as he sleeps, she walks out on him and takes to the "profession." It is a perfect story, with a surprise, psychological twist at the end. In many of his stories, including "A Question of Honour" (*KE*, 149–60), "Kālī Shalvār" ("The Black Salwar"; *LWM*, pp. 206–19), and "Nayā Qānūn" ("The New Constitution"; *KE*, pp. 83–92), one encounters a perfection of sorts. "The New Constitution" can be called a parable not only of the 1935 Government of India Act, but also of the "gradual" home rule being doled out in driblets by the British to the Indians. It is deservedly treated as a classic.

There are quite a few others of such ilk. Many of his bad stories one can put down to the pressures of penury and meeting deadlines, or to drink, which killed him at the young age of forty-three. Quite a few of his stories glitter even today like perfectly cut diamonds. And if one achieved such perfection even in a handful of stories, despite the handicaps of a footloose lifestyle and hard drinking, one should be beyond the cavil of petty reviewers like yours truly. ❒