INTRODUCTION

Fiction is opposed to fact, as not being actual, but an invention, to deceive, to entertain, or by its suggestions of reality to teach. Thus it has been said by Aristotle in poetry versus history that "a fiction may approximate a general truth more closely than a particular (and perhaps unique) fact." The term is now usually limited to the prose novel and short story. Three main types of fiction have been differentiated, a satire, an apologue and a novel.

Fiction is now used in general of the novel, the short story, the novella and related genres. The subject at hand is related with Short Story. There are two main requisites in a Short Story: it should be a story, and it should be short. In a story something happens: there is movement from one situation to another, a movement that develops through some complication to a crisis and final resolution: in other words there is plot. A piece of prose composition may be vivid, true to life, packed with interest, and attractively written, but if it discloses no plot, it is not a story: it may excel as a sketch, or a word-picture, or a study of character, mood, or scene.

The other two elements necessary in every story are the characters and the setting—the actors through whose instrumentality the plot is developed, and the scenery and atmosphere which form the background of the action. Economy of words is necessary and desirable aim at all times, and in a good short story nothing is superfluous; words and sentences are not wasted—each has its work to do and could only be dispensed with to the detriment of the whole.

The clue to the main characteristic of the modern short story is the singleness of its unity. The novel, the drama, the epic—any literary form, in fact, except the lyric—can show a multiple unity. Contrary to short story, in the novel, there is room for a full-scale elaboration of the three elements of a story, plot, characters, and setting: the threads of the plot that are raveled and

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1 Language and Reality, M. Hope Parker, Frederick Muller Ltd, Great Britain, p. 41
unraveled in the movement may of varying importance; the actors may also be
multiplied and play main and subsidiary roles, and their characters elaborated
proportionately; and the comparatively large scale on which the whole work is
planned may give scope for descriptive detail, without letting it clog the
movement or exceed its duty of giving colour and verisimilitude to the narrative.
All this can be done by a skilful novelist without impairing the essential unity of
the whole.

The long reign of Naser-al Din Shah (1848-96) and the Constitutional
Revolution which happened a decade after his death saw the gradual appearance
of modern fiction in Persia. Several social and historical landmarks, most
conspicuously in education and journalism, had a direct outcome on the
development of the new and basically important literary genres of fiction. The
arrival of the printing press in the second decade of the 19th century; the
establishment of the Dar-al Fonun in Tehran in 1851, offering a modern
curriculum taught by Persians and Europeans; the gradual increase in the
number of students sent abroad and the simultaneous sudden rise in the number
of translations, both scientific and literary. The publication of a vast variety of
newspapers all had a direct bearing on the rise of fiction, affecting and in a sense
creating its readers, writers and especially the approach and the matter of its
contents.

In fact, the origin of modern Persian fictions is usually traced by literary
historians to a number of politicians and political activists in the 19th century.
Their chief aims were not to create fictional works but to change what they saw
as the dangerous state of the country through the use of clear forceful prose,
flexible enough to express and spread idea of reforms and the new principles of
modernity as extensively as possible. Most of these early political reformers and
activists spent major part of their lives in a foreign country, writing articles and
letters differentiating the dismal condition of Persia with the relative freedom
and the rule of law that they observed abroad. One of the most well-known of
the reformers was Mirza Malcom Khan Nazim-al Dawla (1833-1908), famous
for his polemical pamphlets such as Kitabcha-ye Ghaibi; the many articles he wrote for his newspaper Qanoon and for his large correspondence with other reformers including Mirza Fath- Ali Akhundzada. They sought the reform of the alphabet and denounced ornate prose styles for being vacuous and for creating unnecessary obstacles to genuine thought and clear thinking. Akhundzada had even a greater and more instant impact on Persian literature and literary criticism. He singles out Ferdowsi and Nizami’s narratives as the only examples of Persian in which style and content are harmony and hence achieve a measure of verisimilitude.

The publication of the translation of all his plays in 1874, together with his short stories Dastan-e Yusof Shah ya Setaregan-e Farib khurda (The tale of king Joseph or the duped stars), a satirical reconstruction of an episode from Eskandar Beg’s Tarikh-e- Alamara-ye Abbasi was a milestone in the history of Persian fiction. This Persian fiction proper is full of colloquialisms in the realistic dialogues of the story. The play introduced the unstilted direct speech in Persian fiction. Thus with regard to the formation of Persian fiction in this period too much emphasis should not be placed on any particular individual. But a new favorable environment of opinion emerged where many voices expressed ideas and demands which would have been barely understood at times earlier. Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani rejects most of classical Persian literature as sycophantic verbiage, and as a morally corruptive force. He, too, exempts Ferdowsi from this mass criticism by pointing out that the only Persian poet commended by European men of letters was Ferdowsi. He argues that although the Shahnama was not altogether devoid of hyperbole, it did instill courage and arouse patriotism in Persians and improve their state of morality. All these themes including nationalism and the concept of literature and particularly fiction as a weapon for propagating enlightened secular morality occur repeatedly in the writing and criticism of fictions in Persia over the course of next century.
The period leading to and including the Persian Constitution Revolution (1905-11) saw the emergence of major literary landmarks, including Ketab-e Ahmad ya Safina-e Talibi and Masalek al Mohsenin by Abd-al-Rahim Talebuff. The very title of the first book is suggestive of its Janus-faced position in fiction; the first part looks forward to later autobiographical novels of moral and educational development, while the second one being similar to classical tradition of poetical anthologies. It imparts knowledge by way of conversation with a gifted child (Ahmad), the information being a patchwork of geography, science and social criticism. His second book Masalek al Mohsenin, like Siyahat -Nama-ye Ebrahim Beg by Zayn-al Abedin Maraghai is a fictional travel account in which the anarchic tyranny and backwardness of the country are portrayed in an episodic manner. Talebuff's Masalek al Mohsenin also resembles in its loose structure filled with incidents of every day life, the picaresque novels of the 16th and early 17th century which proclaimed the rise of modern fiction in Europe.

The nineteenth century in Persia was an age of personal diaries and travelogues. However, the later travelogues were fictional and apparently more period accounts of daily observations by many Qatar princes and officials. This shows the changes in the perception of the world in the early days of modern Persian fiction.