

## NEWS & EVENTS

A number of Urdu writers and patrons left us in the last two years, among them: (1993) Dr. Ajmal Ajmali, Akhtar Husain Jafri, Kamil Qureshi, Maulana Kausar Niyazi, Lala Maheshwar Dayal, Prof. Noorul Hasan, Qamar Hashmi, Saadat Nazir (Muhammad Saadatullah Khan), Sahir Lakhnavi, Shamim Ahmad, Shanti Ranjan Bhattacharya, Wahid Premi, Krishan Murari; (1994) Ahmed Ali, Ahsan Ahmad Ashk, Hira Lal Chopra, Kalam Haidari, Javed Vashisht, Dr. Muhammad Ajmal, Saadat Ali Siddiqi, Shakila Akhtar, Vaqar Vasiqi.

### I

Estelle Dryland attended the ASAA 1994 Biennial Conference held at Murdoch University in Western Australia (13–16 July) and presented “Urdū Shā‘irī—The *Ghazal* at Risk”. Her paper was based upon her observations of the *ghazal* at the hands of the Karachi literary community. In it, she questions “whether the form might turn the complete circle and once again stultify due to the commercialization of the *ghazal* and its deterioration into a form of *tamāsha*.”

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Salima Hashmi, Associate Professor of Fine Arts, National College of Art, Lahore, Pakistan, presented a lecture, “Unveiling the Visible: Women and Art in Pakistan,” on 22 September 1993 in the Weekly Brownbag Lecture series of the Southern Asian Institute at Columbia University.

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David Lelyveld, Columbia University, presented a paper on “Talking the National Language: Hindi/Urdu/Hindustani in Indian Broadcasting and Cinema” in the panel *Mass Media and the Construction of the Indian Nation State* at the 46th Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies (Boston, 24–27 March 1994).

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Gail Minault, Associate Professor of History, University of Texas, Austin, received an NEH fellowship for her research on “The Delhi Renaissance: An Intellectual History of the Mughal Imperial City, 1827–1857.” She will be on leave during the 1994–95 academic year to continue this research.

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Professor Harbans Mukhia of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, spoke at the University of Pennsylvania on “The Evolution of the Urdu Ghazal as a Form of Social Protest” in Spring 1993. His lecture was sponsored by South Asia Regional Studies Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

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Fahmida Riaz, noted Pakistani feminist poet and writer, was in the US in October–November, 1993. She visited many campuses, among them Columbia University and the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and spoke on the subject of “Muslim Women of the South Asian Subcontinent in Myth and Reality: The Literary Evidence.”

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Bapsi Sidhwa, award-winning English-language author from Pakistan, read from her most recent novel *An American Brat* at the Center for Asian Studies, University of Texas at Austin, on 15 November 1993.

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The fourth session of the Barbara Stoler Miller Memorial Seminar at Columbia University hosted, in the fall of 1993, Professor Sara Suleri-Goodyear of the Department of English at Yale University. Her topic, “‘We Sinful Women’: Poetry and Politics in Pakistan,” included a reading of recent feminist poetry in Urdu. She argued that “this poetic expression replicated the collapse of public and private found in the oppressive process of Islamicization. This replication allows for a feminist reinterpretation of Islam and the possibility of an alternative feminist logic.”

## II

Khalid Agaskar received an award from the Maharashtra Urdu Academy on his Urdu translations of Marathi short stories in the collection entitled *Kat̤hā*.

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Pakistani Urdu writer and columnist Intizar Husain received the first *Yatra Award* in Calcutta last fall. The award has been recently instituted by Rupa & Co. (publisher) with assistance from HarperCollins.

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Dr. Jameel Jalibi was recently awarded the *Ḥilāl-e Imtiyāz* by the President of Pakistan, “in recognition of his literacy services, especially compiling of an English-Urdu dictionary which contains 200,000 entries.” (A review of this dictionary appears elsewhere in this issue.) The prize for poetry went to the late Habib Jalib.

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In a radio-play contest, drawing participants from 19 Indian languages, Muhsin Khan’s Urdu play “*Khvāb kī Ta‘bīr*” won first prize (Rs. 25,000).

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Lucknow-based writer Ram Lall received the 1993 Sahitya Akademi Award for his collection of short stories *Pak̤h̤r̤ū*. (Other Urdu recipients included Nida Fazli, Kashmiri Lal Zakir, Asghar Wajahat, and Kamleshwar.) He was also the recipient of the *Nuqūsh Award*, granted by the Government of Pakistan, along with Rs. 15,000, which he donated to the cancer hospital under construction in honor of the memory of the mother of the famous cricketer Imran Khan. Ram Lall was

the subject of a tele-film shown on Lucknow TV in December 1993.

### III

Professor Jagan Nath Azad, famous poet, critic, and Iqbal scholar, has been elected president of the Anjuman-e Taraqqī-e Urdū (India).

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Dr. Christina Oesterheld, a German scholar of Urdu literature, who has extensively researched the writings of Qurratulain Hyder, recently visited Pakistan as a guest of the Anjuman-e Taraqqī-e Urdū. Dr. Oesterheld, who is lecturer of Urdu at the South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg, Germany, is currently working on translations of Urdu women poets, among them: Kishwar Naheed, Fahmida Riaz, Parveen Shakir, Ada Jafri.

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Professor Frances W. Pritchett of Columbia University has received an NEH grant to translate the first and most important Urdu literary history, the *Āb-e Ḥayāt* (1880). This grant will also fund the visits of the noted Urdu critic Shamsur Rahman Faruqi to University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University in the spring of 1994 and 1995.

### IV

SHEMEEM ABHAS BURNEY received a Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin in 1992. Dissertation Title: "Speech Play and Verbal Art in the Indo-Pakistan Oral Sufi Tradition."

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Said Ibrahim Abdel Wahed received his Ph.D. in 1992 from Duquesne University; dissertation title: "Orientalism and Romanticism: A Historical Dialectical Relationship."

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Rukhsana Ali finished an MA at McGill University, Canada, in 1988; her thesis was entitled "The Images of Fatimah in Muslim Biographical Literature."

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Teresa Dawn Hubel received her Ph.D. from the University of Western Ontario, Canada, in 1991. Her dissertation was entitled "India, The New Myth—A Collective Fiction?: The Construction of History in British and Indian Fiction About India's Independence Movement."

### V

Estelle Dryland of the Department of Anthropology, Macquarie University (Australia) informs us that "three students have enrolled to undertake Urdu at Sydney University this year (courtesy Center for Asian Studies/Indian Studies)."  
*Every bit counts!*

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Writer and educator Naiyer Masud writes from Lucknow: "Lucknow-based

researcher Muhammad Ishaq Siddiqi has completed the first Urdu encyclopaedia of Indian animals, in 4 volumes, 1500 pages. Volume one deals with mammals, volume two with birds, three with reptiles, and four with fish, etc. Approximately a thousand animals have been featured, with about 600 colored illustrations. His labor is going to waste, as no publisher has evinced interest in publishing the work. Earlier, Mr. Siddiqi was commissioned by the Taraqqī-e Urdū Bureau (India) to prepare a translation of Salim Ali's famous work *The Book of Indian Birds*, which he completed and delivered to the said Bureau some ten years ago. This work hasn't come out either." *Any takers?*

## VI

In December 1993, the Center for South Asian Studies, University of Virginia, received a \$1,500 donation to support Urdu studies. The donation came from an appreciative parent of two students who are currently studying Urdu there. The Center has formed an Urdu Studies Fund Committee, chaired by Professor Richard Barnett of the Department of History, to determine the allocation of these funds. The funds will be used to improve the teaching of Urdu at the University of Virginia through the acquisition of quality maps of Pakistan, an Urdu word processing program, and Urdu language videos and books.

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Carla Petievich, who attended the conference on "Translating South Asian Literatures," London, 19–20 November 1993, has filed the following report:

This conference, co-sponsored by the Commonwealth Institute, the British Center for Literary Translation, and the Arts Council of Great Britain, was one of the most intellectually stimulating and inspiring meetings this reporter has attended in years. Participants included luminaries from the worlds of fiction, poetry and scholarship, as well as the publishers in Britain who are bringing into print a burgeoning South Asian literature in English translation. The notorious diffidence, if not antipathy, between writers and critics was nowhere apparent in this gathering. Indeed, the number of participants who routinely wear more than one of those occupational "hats" contributed in large part to the appreciative exchange by which this conference was characterized.

The blurring of distinctions between creativity, criticism and scholarship has been manifest in our generation nowhere more dramatically, perhaps, than in the person of the late A.K. Ramanujan, who was to have been the conference's keynote speaker. In the tribute to him by Girish Karnad and U.R. Anantha Murthy a tone was set that highlighted and acknowledged the immense value and creativity inherent in literary translation.

Urdu's presence was prominent at this conference (Rukhsana Ahmad, Aamer Hussein, Carla Petievich, Ralph Russell, M. Athar Tahir) despite the wide stretch of South Asian literatures represented, and despite our tendency

to bemoan Urdu's loss of status in South Asia. In fact one could argue that Urdu enjoys the highest status of any South Asian language in Britain, often serving as the lingua franca of South Asian Muslims (only a minority of whom are native Urdu speakers); Urdu also promises to be the mediating language between the English-speaking British mainstream and Asian Britain.

While many of the distinguished participants had traveled to London specifically for this event, there were numerous others who happened to be in Britain in the course of their own pursuits. This indicates the extent to which South Asian literature is an increasingly transnational phenomenon, and it would be a great mistake to assume that the "center" remains Delhi or Karachi or Bombay or Lahore, while minor artists struggle in the outpost of the British Isles. Rather, the notion of "commonwealth"—so heavily critiqued as obsolete in geopolitical terms—may be meaningful still in terms of postcolonial cultural interaction.

The extent to which the government is involved in the arts in Britain is suggestive (some might say cautionary) for those of us in North America. One happy outcome for literary translators, however, is that the Arts Council works quite closely with the Society of Authors, of which the Translators' Association is part. This association, recognized as a guild, ensures that translation is recognized and remunerated at a professional level, and is integral to the larger enterprise of proliferating world literatures in English.

Some of the conference participants (notably Mrinal Pande) also spoke of the need to translate *into* South Asian languages from other South Asian languages as well as English. The disadvantages of relying on English as a mediating language, and the advantages of thereby achieving more direct translation were convincingly addressed. Problems continue to lie in the cost of publishing and the bureaucratization of government-sponsored literary translation work (as in the case of Sahitya Akademi projects in India).

The inherent subjectivity of translation—both in a translator's choice and in its impact on the ear of a reader—was discussed partly in terms of the perennial dilemma of which texts and which authors most deserve our limited resources. From K. Ayyappa Panikkar's keynote address I remember the following observations most: that the post-industrial languages to which we are bound by our time cannot accommodate pre-Industrial poetry (so large a part of South Asian literature); that, given the particular literary ethos into which any translation is born, there must be new translations [of the same texts and writers] for every generation; and that the translator can be grateful for the "inexhaustibility" of so many South Asian original texts. Dr. Panikkar almost certainly had different texts in mind, but can there be any better way to understand why so many of us continue to take on the daunting and inspiring task of translating Ghalib? even though, to paraphrase Mrinal Pande, the gems of the greatest writers can sometimes turn to dust despite our most sincere efforts?

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Pakistan Association for Women's Studies, Karachi, announces the launching of *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies: Alam-e-Niswan*. This bi-annual journal, which aims at disseminating and sharing research on women's studies globally, will also publish translations of prose and poetry from South Asian writers. Tahera Aftab is the Editor and the Advisory Board includes prominent feminists from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal, Australia, and UK. Send your submissions to: The Editor, *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies*, C-12 Staff Town, University of Karachi, Karachi—75270, Pakistan.

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After remaining defunct for a number of years, *Savērā* (Lahore) has resumed publication with issue 59 under the joint editorship of poet Muhammad Salim-ur-Rahman and critic Suhail Ahmad.

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A national workshop, "Rethinking the South Asian Diaspora: The Politics of Cultural Production," cosponsored by Independent Scholars of South Asia and South Asian Studies Program, Project on the Rhetoric of Inquiry, Opportunity at Iowa, University of Iowa, took place at the University of Iowa, 3–5 June 1994. For further information, please contact: G. Patel, Office of the Provost, III Jessup Hall, University of Iowa, Iowa City IA 52242; or Carla Petievich, 189 Grove Street, Montclair NJ 07042.

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The 1993 Urdu International Award of the Canadian Academy of Urdu Literature was presented to Karachi-based critic and educator Dr. Farman Fatehpuri, currently Chief Editor, Urdu Dictionary Board (Karachi). The award, which consists of Canadian \$1,000 and a commemorative plaque, was instituted, in 1987, by a group of Indian and Pakistani expatriates living in Canada "with the sole purpose of acknowledging annually lifetime contributions of individuals to the Urdu language and literature." Members of the Academy include: Col. (Retd.) Anwar Ahmed, Dr. Ghyas Ahmed, Dr. Bedar Bakht, Ms. Zubeda E. Barmania, Mr. Ashfaq Hussain, and Dr. Khalid Suhail. Recent recipients of the award include: Akhtar-ul-Iman (1992), Ahmad Nadeem Qasimi (1991), Ahmed Faraz (1990), and Jamil-ud-Din Aali (1989).

## VII

EMI (Pakistan) has released a set of three 60-minute cassette tapes featuring a selection of Ghalib's letters in the voice of Zia Mohyeddin, with Ustad Sharif Khan Punchwala accompanying him on the veena. Tape no. TC-CEMCP 6081.

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According to the blurb on the back of Qurratulain Hyder's *Fireflies in the Mist* (see Bibliographic News), "Her collection of short stories in English [translation], entitled *The Sound of Falling Leaves*, is being published by Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. Her English translation of India's first novel, written in Persian in 1790,

was published by Sterling under the title *The Nautch Girl* [review in *AUS* #8] which is now being published under the title *The Dancing Girl* by New Directions, New York.”

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*The Illustrated Weekly of India* (4–10 July 1992) reports:

Khushwant Singh should be way past youthful follies like mid-life crises by now. So there must be another reason why the nation’s hottest-selling columnist is going to be the star of a TV show.

The telefilm, *Toba Tek Singh*, produced and directed by Shakti Sidhu tells the tale of a group of inmates of a mental asylum on the Indo-Pakistan border at the time of Partition. Very impressive, but far from glamorous, therefore one deduces that autograph hunters are not what the Sardar has an eye on. Maybe it’s the fact that the telefilm is based on the classic by Sadat Hasan Manto, one of Khushwant Singh’s favourite authors. ...

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“I’ve just directed a film *In Custody* based on Anita Desai’s novel which was short-listed for the Booker Prize. It’s about an Urdu poet. We shot it in Bhopal. It’s about the decay of culture and life and the decay of language. It is in Urdu and we’re going to subtitle it.” —Ismail Merchant, to Athar Tahir, in an interview.

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*The Journal of Indian Writing in English* is planning a special issue on the late Professor Ahmed Ali and his writings, to be published in January 1995, and would appreciate receiving submissions for consideration. Please direct your inquiries and submissions to:

Dr. G.S. Balaram Gupta  
Editor, *Journal of Indian Writing in English*  
Dept. of English  
Gulbarga University  
Gulbarga — 585 106  
INDIA

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**N O T E :** If you have read a paper or published an item or know of a piece of information of interest to Urdu-wallahs, please do not hesitate to send it to us for inclusion in the next issue of the *AUS*. —Editors.