

This Issue of the *Annual*

WELL, READERS, it's here—in one fell swoop: the story of Ralph Russell's by now roughly 55-year-long—and continuing—association with Urdu. He had promised to write it for us in four installments, to appear between 1996 and 1999, but has found the time and energy to finish it in six months flat. A stunning feat indeed! So our readers will be just as grateful as we are that none of us will now have to wait the entire four years for his story to conclude. And this, by no means, is his only contribution to this issue. He has also provided useful comments on some of the materials that appeared on Urdu and Hindi in previous issues of the *AUS*, as well as registered in a letter to the editors his dissatisfaction with a recent review of Aijaz Ahmad's *Ghazals of Ghalib*. To top it all, we are also including his translation of a short story by Safia Siddiqi. It was slated to appear in *AUS* #9 but constraints of space obliged us to delay its publication for the last two years. We offer our sincere apologies to Safia Siddiqi.

"Urdu & I" is a celebration of life lived in joyous preoccupation with one's calling. It is important for a number of reasons: It underscores, emphatically, the value of commitment in life; it tells the reader something of the social and cultural life of South Asian Muslims, their foibles and, no less, their distinctions. Also, it affords insights into the class structure of India's erstwhile British masters. More significantly still, it foregrounds the travails of being a language teacher. Although the immediate context of Russell's remarks on the status of Urdu teaching is British academia, these remarks apply equally well to the situation of South Asian language instruction across American campuses.

In discussing the social context of Urdu poetry in the last issue of the *AUS*, Ralph Russell had hoped, and we had along with him, that it would lead to a lively and probing debate about the interaction of society and literature. Unfortunately, the expected debate failed to materialize. We had hoped to hear especially from S.R. Faruqi, Urdu's finest critic, but in spite of repeated invitations and even what sounded like an acceptance on his part, *yeh na t̄hī hamārī qismat keh viṣāl-e yār hōiā*. So as we miss his distinguished presence in these pages, we are nonetheless grateful for the comments we have received from Frances W. Pritchett, William Hanaway, and Carla Petievich.

Moving on to other matters: This issue's special section is devoted to Sa'adat

Ḥasan Manṭō, in which we present just a few of the English papers read at the Manto Seminar organized by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study at Shimla, India, 21–23 May 1996. Some of the papers analyze Manto from perspectives and theoretical assumptions that are not strictly literary or narrowly critical, but nonetheless seek to advance the current state of Manto studies. Some other papers underscore the hazards of translation—the mutilation Manto has suffered at the hands of some of his English translators.

Through a circuitous route Aamer Hussein backtracks to his South Asian heritage in “Forcing Silence to Speak: Muhammadi Begum, *Mir’ātu l-‘Arūs* and the Urdu Novel,” to realize with both the shock of discovery and a sense of loss how “entire intellectual trajectories—buried in the footnotes of colonial chronicles or sheathed in the dogmatic criticism of a bygone ‘progressive’ era—emerge to make me aware of an age of quiet struggle of which I had only a dim or intuitive consciousness.” Indeed.

“Student Notes,” “Thesis Summary,” and “Abstracts” are the newest additions to the *AUS*’s inventory of more-or-less regular items, and will appear as frequently as the material warrants. If you know of a student essay, paper, or the like that makes some small contribution to the field, please encourage the writer to send it to us for consideration. And if you are a student yourself, cast hesitation to the wind.

The *AUS* is tempted to start its monograph series. We are looking for suitable manuscripts. Details appear in an announcement elsewhere in this issue.

The Oxford University Press (Pakistan) is starting a “Pakistan Writers Series.” The inaugural volume will feature the writings of Abdullah Hussein, author of the novel *Udās Naslān*, shortly to appear in English translation under the auspices of UNESCO. It will be followed by a volume of Hasan Manzar’s short stories, some of which were featured in the last issue of the *AUS*. Future volumes will present the works of Khadija Mastur, Ahmad Nadim Qasmi, Fehmida Riaz, Hajira Masrur, and others. If you are interested in editing/translating a volume, please write to the series general editor.

Zeeshan Sahil has especially offered the *AUS* some of his recent poems, which we include in the Urdu section. Our sincere thanks to him. Many people have been helpful in different ways, among them, Ralph Russell as always, Shanul Haq Haqque, Yousuf Amer, Ajmal Kamal, Christina Oesterheld, Ulrike Stark, Brian Spooner, Mrinal Miri, M. Asaduddin, and Munir Pervaiz. Thanks to them all. □