

EVENTS, INQUIRIES, NEWS, NOTICES, REPORTS

A NUMBER of Urdu writers and patrons left us since *AUS* #14 (May 1999), among them: (1999) Afsar Azar, Babu Vazir Ali, Basit Azim, Colonel Muhammad Khan, Fauq Ludhianvi, Fazl Haq Qureshi, Hafiz Ludhianvi, Hamid Zaman, Hasrat Jaipuri, Ibrahim Yusuf, Inayatullah, Iqbal Safipuri, Kaiwal Suri, Karrar Husain, Khalish Hamdani, Meerza Adeeb, Muhammad Yunus Hasrat, Muhammad Sulaiman Sabir, Mushtaq Shad, Nazir Baluch, Rahman Muznib, Saeed Rashid, Sahibzada Mahbub Husain Qadri, Shafiqur Rahman, Shahid Kamrani, Shakil Ahmad Zia, Shamim Jaipuri, Shams Zubairi, Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi (Ali Mian), Syed Hasnain Kazmi, Syed Muhammad Jafri, Syed Muhammad Taqi, Syed Muinuddin Shah, Talib Jalandhari, Zafar Jaunpuri; (2000) Sami Anwar, Irtiza Azmi, Muzaffar Ali Syed.

I

Munfarid, a collection of short stories by the Germany-based Urdu woman writer Naima Ziauddin was the recipient of a cash prize of \$5000. The prize was presented to the writer by Urdu Markaz International at a ceremony in Los Angeles in November 1999.

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Hasan Manzar's collection of short stories, *A Requiem for the Earth: Selected Stories*, was chosen as a finalist for the Paterson Fiction Prize for 1999.

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West Bengal Urdu Academy has conferred the All India Pervaiz Shahidi Award on Shamsur Rahman Faruqi in recognition of his invaluable contributions to Urdu literature.

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Bombay-based fiction writer Salam Bin Razzaq received Sahitya Akademi's Translation Award for Urdu.

II

The following is an inventory of scholars and the papers which they presented at conferences, seminars, and symposia:

Amy Bard (Columbia University): "Value and Vitality in a Literary Tradition: Female Poets and the Urdu Marsiyah," at the 28th Annual Conference on South Asia (Madison, 14-17 October 1999).

Priyamvada Gopal (Cornell University): “‘Tragic Labyrinths’? Sex, Space and the Engendering of the Modern World in the Work of Rashid Jahan, ‘Angarewali,’” at the 28th Annual Conference on South Asia (Madison, 14–17 October 1999).

Mary Hegland (Sanata Clara University): “Malleable Mourning: Shi’a Muslim Women Crafting Muharram Flagellation Rituals for Personal and Political Caring in Peshawar, Pakistan,” at the 28th Annual Conference on South Asia (Madison, 14–17 October 1999).

Christopher Lee (Illinois Wesleyan University): “‘What Kind of Wrinkle is on the Forehead of Time’?: Urdu Language, Poetry and Muslim Identity in Banaras,” at the 28th Annual Conference on South Asia (Madison, 14–17 October 1999).

Scott Marcus (University of California, Santa Barbara): “From Isolation to Regional Renown: Birha, a Folk Music Genre of the Bhojpuri Region of North India,” at the 28th Annual Conference on South Asia (Madison, 14–17 October 1999).

Ali Husain Mir (Indiana-Purdue University): “Urdu Poetry, Socialist Ethos and International Solidarity,” at the 28th Annual Conference on South Asia (Madison, 14–17 October 1999).

Raza Mir (Monmouth University): “*Who Yaar Hai Jo Khusboo ki Tarah, Jis ki Zubaan Urdu ki Tarah: The Friendly Association Between Urdu Literature and Hindi Cinema*,” at the 28th Annual Conference on South Asia (Madison, 14–17 October 1999).

Christina Oesterheld (University of Heidelberg): “Reform and/or Entertainment: Some Urdu Novels of the Late Nineteenth Century,” at the workshop “New Literary Histories for the 19th Century India: Mapping the Terrain,” organized by the Center for South Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley (16–18 September 1999).

Shantanu Phukan (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill): “‘Through Throats Where Many Rivers Meet’: Macaronic Poetry and Cosmopolitan Mughal Identity,” at the 28th Annual Conference on South Asia (Madison, 14–17 October 1999).

David Pinault (Santa Clara University): “Transformations in Lamentation Ritual in the ‘Horse of Karbala’ Procession in Leh district, Ladakh,” at the 28th Annual Conference on South Asia (Madison, 14–17 October 1999).

James M. Wilce (Northern Arizona University): “Lamenting the Past, or the Passing of Lament? The Postcolonial Fate of a Genre in Bangladesh and India,” at the 28th Annual Conference on South Asia (Madison, 14–17 October 1999).

Richard Wolf (Harvard University): “The Aesthetics of Drumming in Ritual Mourning,” at the 28th Annual Conference on South Asia (Madison, 14–17 October 1999).

III

Priyamvada Gopal successfully defended her Ph.D. dissertation: “Midnight’s Labors: Gender, Nation and Narratives of Social Transformation in Transitional India,” at Cornell University (November 1999). In her dissertation she looks mostly, although not only, at PWA-affiliated or -influenced writers.

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Kathleen Beier, the University of Leipzig, wrote her M.A. dissertation, on “Indiens Weg in die Unabhängigkeit im Werk von Sa‘adat Hasan Manto. Die Urdu-Kurzgeschichten ‘Naya qanun’ und ‘Murli ki dhun’” [India’s path to independence: The Urdu short stories “Nayā Qānūn” and “Murli ki Dhun”].

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Shantanu Phukan successfully defended his Ph.D. dissertation, “Through a Persian Prism: Hindi and *Padmavat* in the Mughal Imagination,” at the University of Chicago, in December 1999.

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Syed Akbar Hyder, who earned a doctorate in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University in December 1999, has recently joined the Department of Asian Studies, Texas University, Austin, where he will offer courses in Islamic mysticism, Shi‘ism, Indo-Muslim cultures and also oversee the Urdu program.

IV

Nuzhat Abbas, Director, Comparative Women’s Studies in Europe, Antioch University, sends the following report:

Toronto, June 11, 1999: Fahmida Riaz, the renowned Pakistani poet, received a standing ovation after her first reading at Desh Pardesh, the Ninth Intra-National Festival/Conference of diasporic South Asian culture. The second night of the four-day Toronto-based festival was entitled “Infinite Powers” and focused on feminist responses to fundamentalism and nationalism. Fahmida Riaz ended the evening with moving poems that tied the personal and lyrical to the violence of the political. She read her poetry in Urdu and followed this with English translations for the benefit of the primarily second-generation, non-Urdu-speaking audience. Many younger members of the

audience were deeply stirred by what was their first introduction to Fahmida Riaz's oeuvre. On Saturday, June 12, Riaz also participated in a lively panel discussion entitled "Fundamentalism in South Asia and the Diaspora." Earlier that week, Riaz also addressed women at the South Asian Women's Centre and spoke about the history of women's resistance since the creation of the state of Pakistan and about the work done by her organization WADA (Women and Development Association). During her time in Toronto, Riaz gave several radio and television interviews and shared her views on poetry and politics with her inimitable wit, intelligence and generosity.

For more information on Desh Pardesh, call (416) 340 0485, send an e-mail to desh@ican.net, or visit the web-site at <http://home.ican.net/~desh>.

V

A two-day seminar on the art and times of the late Urdu poet Firaq Gorakhpuri was held on 21–22 May, 1999 at Allahabad. The seminar was organized jointly by National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy.

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The Urdu Trust, London, has announced a World Urdu Conference to be held in February 2000.

VI

Between October and December 1999, the Postal Department of Pakistan issued a number of stamps honoring distinguished individuals, among them the late poet Josh Malihabadi and Bari Alig.

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Ghalib's residence in Gali Qasim Jan, Balli Maran, Delhi, has been taken over by the Delhi administration as a national monument.

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Urduwallahs will be glad to learn that the grave of poet Mirzā Muḥammad Rafī' "Saudā" was recently rediscovered at Imambara Agha Baqar, Lucknow, near the old Chowk vegetable market. It was first discovered in 1957 and was determined to be Saudā's after a group of eminent litterateurs and academicians, among them Professor Hayatullah Ansari, visited the site and confirmed its authenticity. Since no canopy or mausoleum was built over it, the grave again got buried under debris when a vegetable market developed there. When the state government decided to shift the vegetable and fruit market to Dubagga and the trustees of Imambara Agha Baqar won a court case and started to construct the boundary wall, the gravestone again surfaced. According to the date mentioned on the stone, Saudā was buried in A.H. 1195. Since this is A.H. 1420, the grave is 225 years old. Although Saudā's grave has been found, that of Mir Taqī Mir remains buried below some corner of this bustling city. [Courtesy C.M. NAIM]

VII

M. Hamidullah Bhat, Director, National Council for the Propromotion of Urdu Language, New Delhi, has sent the following for our readers. Please read it along with his letter elsewhere in this issue.

Urdu as a Contact Language in the Public Domain: Framework for the Project

The points stated below will put the project in a proper perspective:

1. The project is germane because Urdu is an integral part of the Indian national linguistic heritage and is recognized as a distinct national language as enumerated in the Constitution of India.

The most important endeavour of NCPUL thus far has been to rediscover the roots of the Urdu language in Indian culture and redefine its role in the evolution of a Pan-India identity in a pluralistic and multilingual environment. NCPUL has now been able to initiate a debate in the country with the thesis being that since the roots of the Urdu language are essentially Indian, the language has to grow in the total linguistic scenario of India.

2. There is a substantial section of the Indian population which identifies itself with Urdu and which is as important in shaping the composite identity of India as any other group.

3. The gray area between Urdu and Hindi is very large and this, in fact, supports the linguistic vibrancy of these languages at all levels of social communication, including electronic media and films. This gray area is as much a source of strength for Urdu as it is for Hindi. Hindi is Urdu's strength and Urdu is Hindi's.

4. The basic reality is that in the last 50 years, Urdu as a minority language has not made as much progress as seems desirable even though the right to receive primary education in one's mother tongue is provided under Article 350A and a large network of educational institutions has been set up by the Urdu linguistic minority.

5. Despite numerous handicaps, Urdu still functions as a vibrant second language in all states where Hindi or any other language is the official language of the state.

6. Urdu is the second most widely spoken language in those regions which were recognized as Hindi regions at the time of the reorganization of states for administrative and official purposes in 1956. In fact, these Hindi states are bilingual regions of Urdu and Hindi. A bilingual state, as per the official interpretation, is one where a minimum of 15% of the total population of that particular state speaks a language other than the official language. This other language is to be used officially as the second language of the state. Likewise, if a section of the population in a district or a commissariat of a state has at least 15% of its population speaking a given language, then that particular

district or commissariat will itself be declared bilingual. One purpose of this survey is to identify all those areas in every state that are bilingual.

7. The term “substantial proportion” is widely used at the governmental level for linguistic minorities. An appropriate interpretation of this term is that a linguistic minority must constitute at least 10% of the total population. For instance, in Gujrat, West Bengal and the states in south India, wherever the Hindi-speaking population constitutes at least 10% of the population at the block or district level, it is designated a linguistic minority. A second purpose of this survey is to prepare a list of the blocks, tehsils, parganas, districts and commissariats in which Urdu-speakers make up at least 10% of the population.

8. In the non-Hindi-speaking regions, particularly in south India, Urdu language and literature has flourished for centuries and the tradition of Urdu has very strong bases there. When Hindi was officially introduced in these regions, the tradition of Urdu helped it develop because of the common grammatical structure and syntax. Another purpose of this survey is to delineate and highlight this role of Urdu.

9. Census statistics for several important languages of north India have been mixed in with those for Hindi. For example, Avadhi, Bhojpuri, Braj, Bundeli, Haryanavi, Maithili, Magahi, etc., are among the languages now asserting their separate identity. For quite some time the Office of Linguistic Minorities' Commission has been receiving representations to redress the grievances and recognition of such languages. The ever-increasing size of the 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India suggests that more languages are on the way to receiving separate identity and recognition. What the position of Urdu is in relation to these languages should be another important aspect of this survey.

10. The Indian federation is a dynamic entity and new geographical demarcations are underway to cater to the demands of emerging socio-linguistic identities which may also assume political proportions. It is imperative that the survey attend to these sensibilities as well. What the position of Urdu will be in the linguistic profile of these new regions will also make an important and interesting study since some of these regions will also have substantial Urdu-speaking populations.

11. The propagation and promotion of Hindi as the national language is a national imperative. However, in order to make Hindi an all-encompassing linguistic phenomenon, it must reflect the aspirations of all linguistic groups and develop a medium acceptable nationwide. The jargonization of Hindi has made this difficult. In the same way Pakistan's official patronage of Urdu has taken it far away from linguistic realism. In India Urdu has hitherto not been subject to mechanical promotion and it continues to serve as a major link between Hindi and various regional languages in the Urdu-Hindi belt. So, it will be interesting to study how the Urdu language has made a place for itself in the everyday, ordinary communication strategies adopted by the people of

India.

12. Primarily because Urdu is still considered and accepted as a link language among the various regions of India, the project will also explore the linguistic affinity between Urdu and other national languages and redefine the symbiotic interdependence of languages constituting the grand lingua-francas of our composite identity.

[Edited for the *AUS*.]

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Philip Nikolayev, Harvard University, wishes to make the following announcement:

A representative collection of *qawwālīs* which will commemorate the great *qawwālī* performer, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, is currently being compiled and translated into English. Tentatively titled “Nusrat: Revealed,” it will include 65 *qawwālī* texts, each appearing in the Urdu and Devanagari scripts, Roman transliteration and English translation, all done by hand by Indian calligraphers. The editorial team that is putting this volume together has completed work on a Nusrat documentary, “A Voice from Heaven,” which overlaps with the book to a certain extent. The team of translators includes Philip Nikolayev, Andrew McCord, Shahram Shiva, Mabel Khawaja, Gurdit Singh, Qamar al-Huda, with Adam Nayyar and Agha Shahid Ali acting as senior advisors and editors. The book will come with 3 musical CDs or one CD-ROM by Rahat, Farrukh and Dildar (Nusrat’s nephew, brother and *tabla*-player). E-mail questions to the coordinator, Varun Soni, at qawwali@hotmail.com.

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In a letter, dated 28 September 1999, Cabeiri deBergh Robinson, Cornell University, currently in Pakistan on a Fulbright grant, wishes the readers of the *AUS* to know:

I have recently completed a project with my friend and colleague, Asher Mahmood, to publish, in the form of an audio cassette, an oral reading of his collection of Urdu poetry, *Mittī kā Khudā: Ashir Maḥmūd kē sātḥ ek mehfilē Nazm*. This collection has been ready for publication since 1997 but has remained unpublished because publishing houses in Pakistan consider that several of the poems which have political or religious implications are likely to incur government censure. Asher has refused to publish the collection without these poems.

The cassette, for which I have acted as project editor and which we have co-produced, was professionally recorded at the Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan Academy in a live-reading setting. Accompanying it is a brochure in English which explains the political and artistic impetus behind the project and provides an

introduction to Asher Mahmood who, despite his young age, already has a strong reputation in Pakistani literary circles for the quality of his poetry and for his activities as the independent publisher of the monthly *Literary News*.

We have decided to release the cassette overseas one month before the Pakistan in-country release. This decision was taken in the light of Asher's past experience, as an editor and journalist, of unofficial censorship in Pakistan in which semi-independent institutions act to impede the production and distribution of information in such a way as to make legal remedy in the courts irrelevant. By distributing the cassette overseas in the South Asian diaspora, we seek to create an environment for the release of the cassette in Pakistan in which any criticism has to be made openly and to which we will have a chance to respond. We plan a public opening and screening of the cassette at the end of November and have already begun a series of press interviews to publicize the project. The first will be published in the Sunday Literary Edition of *Jang* on 10 October. We are confident that given this chance, our project will be successful. We are already receiving a very strong positive response in the artistic community in Lahore as there has never been a "spoken word" project done in Pakistan and many people recognize that we are potentially not only publishing the work of a particular poet, but creating a new market in Pakistan for a different kind of literary production.

We already have orders for approximately 75 cassettes in the US, mostly from US/Pakistani academics and writers and desire to speed the distribution of the cassette before the November opening in Pakistan.

Please send your order for the cassette to: Dr. Grace Clark / 5511 Roland Avenue / Baltimore, MD 21210 / U.S.A. Please make check payable to Cabeiri Robinson. Price: \$6 (handing and postage included).

Please also, if you find the project as worthy and the poetry as beautiful as I do, publicize this cassette among your social and professional networks. A positive response will create a strong foundation for our ability to release this cassette within Pakistan. It will also provide Asher with some income which he can use to support his ongoing literary endeavors.

[Edited for the *AUS*.]

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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*. —*Ed.*