

NEWS & EVENTS

A NUMBER OF URDU WRITERS and patrons left us since *AUS #10* (November 1995), among them: (1995) Mumtaz Mufti, Fazl Tabish, Shams Kanwal; (1996) Sehba Akhtar, Akhtarul Iman, Mumtaz Mufti, Upendra Nath Ashk, Nasim Hijazi, Khwaja Ahmad Faruqi, Faruq Shafaq, Naim Ahmad, Nurul Hasan Jafri (President, Anjuman-e Taraqqi-e Urdū, Karachi), Hameed Qaisar, Samad Shaheen, Anjum Rizwani, Nazir Banarsi, Dileep Badal, Zuhurul Hasan Sharib, Zafar Oganvi, and Naim Ahmad.

I

Majlis-e Farōgh-e Urdū Adab, Doha, Qatar, has instituted two prizes of Rs. 100,000 each to be given yearly to one Indian and one Pakistani elderly writer. Critic Ale Ahmad Suroor (India) and poet/short-story-writer Ahmad Nadim Qasmi (Pakistan) were the recipients of this year's award.

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The Urdu Academy (U.P.) awarded recently its most prestigious Abul Kalam Azad Award to the noted research scholar Nisar Ahmad Faruqi.

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Balraj Komal, a Delhi-based poet and short story writer, is the first recipient of a prize awarded by the Firaq Memorial Society, Delhi.

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Wahab Ashrafi is the first Urdu writer to receive the Bharatiya Bhasha Saman.

II

Vudya Kitaban Förlag, Sollentuna, Sweden, held a series of workshops (23–26 June 1996) focusing on the issues of immigration, integration, and the role of immigrant writers in the creation of identity. Related events included: an evening of reading of short stories, visits to the Multicultural Center at Fittja and to Uppsala, meeting with Swedish writers, the inauguration of a short story collection by the Pakistani-Norwegian writer Saeed Anjum, a *mushā'ira*, and an open general meeting with guest of honor Abid Hassan Minto, Advocate, Supreme Court, Pakistan. Participants included, among others: Khalid Sohail (Canada); Abrar Hasan (France); Naima Ziauddin (Germany); Abid Hassan Minto (Pakistan); Bakhsh Lyallpuri and Arif Iftikhar (U.K.); and Muhammad Umar Memon (U.S.A.).

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The 35th International Congress of Asian and North African Studies is scheduled

for 7–12 July 1997 in Budapest, Hungary. The general subject will be “Oriental Studies in the 20th Century: The State of the Art.” The Near and Middle East & North Africa section will include papers on, among other topics, Urdu Studies. For further details, write to: Tamás Iványi (ICANAS); ELTE-Korösi Csoma Társaság; H-1088 Budapest, Múzeum krt. 4/B; Hungary. The e-mail address is: “ivanyi@osiris.elte.hu”; fax: (361) 266-5699.

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The Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, U.S.A., presented “Paradigm Shifts in South Asian Literature: An Evening with Javed Akhtar and Ifti Nasim” on 18 May 1996 at The Inland Meeting & Exposition Center, Westmont, Illinois. Javed Akhtar is both a poet and film lyricist, but is better known as the finest script writer in Hindi Cinema. Ifti Nasim is a gay poet from Pakistan who has produced two collections of poetry and one of short stories in Urdu.

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Between June 1995 and May 1996, the Writers Forum of Pakistani Canadians, Toronto, held a number of literary meetings with Urdu writers, among them: Saeed Anjum (short story writer and documentary filmmaker; Norway), S. R. Faruqi (poet, critic; India), G.C. Narang (critic; India), A.Q. Zia (poet; Canada), M.U. Memon (U.S.A.), Satyeh Paul Anand (poet; currently based in Washington, D.C.), Razaul Jabbar (short story writer; Canada), Adil Mansuri (poet, U.S.A.), and Jamiluddin Aali (poet, Pakistan). A report of the Forum’s activities is available through: Munir Pervaiz; 10-1235 Random Street; Pickering, Ontario L1W 1J3; Canada.

III

C.M Naim, the University of Chicago, presented “Transvestic Poetry in Urdu” at the South Asia Forum, University of Wisconsin, Madison (10 November 1995).

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Carla Petievich (Montclair State College) presented a paper, “Making ‘Manly’ Poetry: The Construction of Urdu’s ‘Golden Age,’” at the 24th Annual Conference on South Asia (Madison, 20–22 October, 1995).

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Griffith Chaussée, University of Wisconsin–Madison, presented “Literary Criticism in Lahore: Report from a Year in the Field” at the South Asia Forum, University of Wisconsin, Madison (16 February 1996). He returned from Lahore (December 1995) where he had been spending a year on a Fulbright Research Grant to complete the fieldwork project on his doctoral dissertation, “A Shift in Paradigms: Poetry to Prose, 1850–1930.”

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Tariq Rahman and Herman van Olphen, both of the University of Texas, Austin, presented their papers on “Language and Politics in Pakistan” and “Urdu and Language Policy in India,” respectively, at a panel on “Language Policy in South Asia” in the 11th Annual South Asia Conference, University of California,

Berkeley (17–18 February 1996).

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Muhammad Umar Memon presented a paper on Sa'adat Hasan Manto's play "In this Maelstrom" in the seminar "The Life and Works of Sa'adat Hasan Manto," which was organized by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study at Shimla, India (21–23 May 1996).

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David Lelyveld, who is now working as Program Officer for South and Southeast Asia at the Social Science Research Council, New York, has recently published "Upon the Sub-dominant: Administering Music on All-India Radio," in C. Breckenridge, ed., *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in South Asian World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

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The following report of her academic and scholarly activities was sent by Dr. Christina Oesterheld, Department of Modern South Asian Languages and Literatures, University of Heidelberg, Germany, on 13 March 1996:

I am planning to prepare a paper on attitudes and theoretical points of departure in present day Urdu criticism for the European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies to be held in Copenhagen, August 21–24, 1996.

In November 1995, Fahmida Riaz spent two days in Heidelberg. On November 21st, she read a paper on the image of women in Urdu literature and recited poems in Urdu. The German translations were read by myself. The program which took place in the public library of Heidelberg drew quite a big audience (ca. 50 persons), German as well as Pakistani.

Fahmida Riaz's visit was part of a two-week stay in Germany. For further details on her activities in Germany, please contact Eva Maria Fischer; Forum für interkulturelle Arbeit und Völkerverständigung; Daiserstr. 9; c/o Dritte Welt Cafe; D 81371 München; Germany. Eva Maria Fischer herself is working on a Ph.D. dissertation about theater in Pakistan.

During the last semester, we held a seminar under the title *Muslimsein in Indien* (Being Muslim in India) based on a study of novels written by Indian Muslim writers in Hindi and Urdu. On the Urdu side, chapters from Qurratulain Hyder's novels, Abdussamad's *Dō-gaz Zamīn* and Sughra Mehdi's *Rāg Bhōpālī* were discussed.

At present, I am working on Urdu-German word-lists for our students' use in the fields of: (1) media language, (2) literary theory and criticism, and (3) linguistics.

As usual, I spent most of my time on language teaching. There is nothing worth mentioning about it.

My German translation of Azra Abbas's short story *Khushbū* ("Der Duft") was published in *Lotos auf Steinen. Ein literarischer Streifzug durch die islamische Welt*. Hrsg. von Beate-Ursula Endriss und Kurt Scharf im Auftrag

des Hauses der Kulturen der Welt. Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt/Das Arabische Buch, 1994: 35–38.

The following papers are to be published in 1996:

“‘Wie unglücklich ist Zafar, nicht einmal für sein Grab // fand er zwei Handbreit Boden in der Gasse der Geliebten’—Kein Platz für Muslime in Indien?” (“‘How unfortunate is Zafar, not even for his grave // Did he find a piece of earth in the beloved’s lane’—No Place for Muslims in India?”)

“Die Begegnung mit dem Westen als kulturelle Herausforderung—*Ibnul-Vaqt* von Nazir Ahmad” (“The East-West Encounter as a Cultural Challenge—*Ibnul-Vaqt* by Nazir Ahmad”).

The Hero or Anti-Hero in the Contemporary Urdu Short Story in India.

Recently, the Ph.D. dissertation of one of my colleagues at Heidelberg has been published. Though the author has dealt with novels written in Hindi, to my mind it is a must-read for every German-knowing Urduwala:

Ulrike Stark. *Tage der Unzufriedenheit. Identität und Gesellschaftsbild in den Romanen muslimischer Hindischriststeller (1965–1990)*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 1995 (Marburg, Univ. Diss., 1994).

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Dr. Ulrike Stark, Department of Modern South Asian Languages and Literatures, University of Heidelberg, Germany, sent us on 12 July 1996 the following report of her research project: “Munshi Newal Kishore and the Newal Kishore Press of Lakhnau: a publisher’s contribution towards the development and propagation of Hindi literature in the 19th century”:

As the first great commercial printer-publisher, leading entrepreneur in North India, journalist, proprietor and for some time editor of the famous *Oudh Akhbar*, Munshi Newal Kishore (1836–1895) is an outstanding figure in the history of 19th century northern India. In 1858 he established a printing press in Lakhnau which was soon to become the largest press and publishing house in India, renowned mainly for its high-class publications of Persian, Arabic and Urdu literature but also for its Sanskrit and Hindi publications, the latter comprising about 35% of the total output of the press. Through his publishing activities Munshi Newal Kishore, a Hindu by birth, became a promoter of Islamic culture and literature, rescuing many old masterpieces from oblivion. Dedicated to reformist ideas and the concept of mass education, he followed a policy of making books of both Islamic and Hindu learning as well as works of Urdu and Hindi literature available to the general public through low price editions. He also sponsored translations from classical Sanskrit works into Hindi, Urdu and Persian.

The project will focus on two hitherto neglected aspects of Munshi Newal Kishore’s publishing activities: (1) the publication of works of Hindi literature (including works in Braj Bhasa and Hindi commentaries or

versions of Sanskrit texts), of which there is a notable increase in number from the late 1860s onwards; and (2) the collaboration of the Newal Kishore Press with the N.W.-Provinces & Oudh Educational Department in printing and publishing school textbooks in the vernaculars. As manager in charge of the vernacular depot of the province, Munshi Newal Kishore not only printed, but sold or distributed for sale, respectively, all the books used by the Department.

The project aims at giving:

- quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Hindi publications themselves, thus contributing to the history of modern Hindi literature in the 19th century
- an assessment of the role played by the Newal Kishore Press in the canonization and development of Hindi literature during the period 1860–1900.
- an insight into the language policy followed by the press with regard to Hindi and Urdu publications at a time when the Hindi-Urdu controversy was at its height
- an analysis of the terms and outcome of an apparently successful interaction between Munshi Newal Kishore, a member of the vernacular élite, and the British colonial administration in the field of education, and
- an interpretation of Newal Kishore’s pro-British and pro-western attitude and his dedication to the promotion of indigenous culture and literature in the light of the formation of national identity and modern Indian consciousness in the 19th century.

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Fahmida Riaz, feminist, poet, and consultant on National Commission for History and Culture, Pakistan, attended a conference on “The Power of the Word Culture, Censorship, and Voice” at Bellagio, Italy, 13–17 May 1996. The Conference—organized by Women’s World, a New York-based international organization of women, and hosted by Rockefeller Foundation—discussed the following topics:

- the global crisis
- competing visions of the future
- what is culture and why does it matter?
- cultural domination and censorship
- what do we mean by gender-based censorship?
- cases of gender-based censorship
- why censorship must be fought

Ms. Riaz, who participated as a writer and publisher, made oral presentations on what women writers do in persecution and exile and how they can be helped.

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On a recent trip to Madison, Prof. David Shulman informed us that noted Urdu critic Shamsur Rahman Faruqi has been invited by Hebrew University, Jerusalem, to present a series of lectures there on "The Poetics of the Urdu Ghazal," on 24, 26, and 28 November 1996. Hebrew University plans to publish the lectures.

IV

Yousuf Amer, Urdu Dept., Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt, is currently finishing a Ph.D. in Urdu at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, entitled "A Comparison of Modern Urdu and Arabic Poetry." For a more detailed account of his dissertation and for the current status of Urdu studies in Egypt, see his articles in the Urdu section of this issue.

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Eva Maria Fischer, Forum für interkulturelle Arbeit und Völkerverständigung, Munich, Germany, hopes to complete her Ph.D. dissertation on "Theatre and Cultural Identity: Political and Intercultural Processes in the Theatre in Pakistan since the Zia Regime" by October 1996.

V

C.M. Naim would like to bring the following important bibliographic items to the attention of the readers of the *AUS*:

Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library (Patna, India) and its Director, Dr. Abid Raza Bedar, are to be congratulated for taking the lead in republishing some of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's many seminal writings, and in particular for again making available his commentary (incomplete) on the Qur'an after a gap of almost a century. Sir Syed had started work on the commentary and by the time of his death in 1798 he had completed roughly half the work, up to the 16th *pāra*, or the end of Chapter 20 (*Sūra Tā Hā*). The reprint is a photo reproduction of its *nasta'liq* (2nd) edition published in Lahore. In addition to the commentary, they have also republished two smaller relevant books. The details are as follows:

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān wa hua 'l-Hudā wa 'l-Furqān*; 2 vols.

———. *Tabrīr fī Uṣūl 't-Tafsīr*.

[An exchange of letters between Sir Syed and his close friend Navab Mohsinul Mulk Syed Mahdi Ali Khan which Sir Syed himself eventually published together with a note detailing his principles of Qur'ānic commentary.]

Additionally, *Muqaddama-e Tafṣīr-e Sar Saiyad* (Introduction to Sir Syed's Commentary on the Qur'ān).

[A collection of writings in English and Urdu on the Commentary and Sir Syed's religious thought. Put together by Abid Raza Bedar (though his name is not on the cover or the inside title page). Writers included: Altaf Husain Hali, Muhammad Iqbal, Abul Kalam Azad, Navab Syed Ali Hasan Khan, Maulana Sa'id Ahmad Akbarabadi, Syed Abul Ala Maududi, Maulvi Muhammad Uzair, Dr. Syed Abdullah, S. M. Ikram, Abid Husain, Syed Hamid, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Prof. Umaruddin, Farrukh Jalali, Kabir Ahmad Jaisi, Haroon Khan Shervani, and M. Mujeeb. Also included is Dr. Daud Rahbar's English translation of Sir Syed's "Principles of Exegesis" and a personal essay on Sir Syed by Salahuddin Mahmud.]

The three books were published by the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, in 1995 and are available through Maktaba Jamia Ltd.; Jamia Nagar; New Delhi 110 025; India.

VI

Bak Sju Hav (Beyond the Seven Seas/Sāt Samandar Pār) is a Norwegian film for children, shot on location in Lahore (Pakistan) and Oslo (Norway). Written and directed by Espen Thorstenson and Saeed Anjum and produced by Aprilfilm (Norway), it presents the story of Aslam, a Pakistani "boy who is first separated from his father and then goes after him to the land Beyond the Seven Seas—Norway." Nominated for the Best Norwegian Feature Film in 1991, it was in the following year recipient of the First Prize in the European Youth Film Festival (Belgium) and Second Prize in Bellinzona Children's Film Festival (Switzerland). It was also selected for Cannes Junior, the children's film festivals at Edinburgh, Chicago, India, and Sidney, and for Focus on Asia (Japan), Cinemagic, and Cinkid. It was chosen by Norwegian State Television for its Christmas Eve prime-time feature film in 1991, and was also bought by Danish Television, Dutch Television, and Super Channel (U.K.).

Espen Thorstenson has written, edited, and directed quite a few award-winning short films, documentaries, and feature films, and Saeed Anjum is an Oslo-based Pakistani playwright and fiction writer who has worked on the UNESCO project "Living in Two Cultures" (1977–79).

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Tehrik-e-Niswan, a Karachi-based women's organization, has opted for theater as the most effective medium for spreading its message. Since 1981 it has presented numerous feminist plays that highlight the plight of women. Recently in Karachi on the premises of Alliance Française and with support from World Association of Christian Communication, it presented (6–12 May 1996) "Sulṭān kā Faiṣla," an Urdu adaptation by Asif Farrukhi of "al-Sulṭān al-Ḥā'ir," an Arabic play by the

playwright Taufiq al-Hakīm. The play was directed by Khalid Ahmad and Golam Sarwar.

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Qaid-e Hayāt, a three-act play by Surendra Verma, offered 6 performances at the Smith Theatre, Howard Community College, and at the Dorothy Betts Theater, Marvin Center, George Washington University, Washington, D.C., between 25 November and 17 December 1995. The play, directed by Manjula Kumar and produced by Krishan Banga, is “juxtaposed against the fabric of nineteenth-century Delhi” and “takes us on a journey through a period in the life of Mirza Ghalib, exploring the complexities and frailties of human relationships.”

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According to an ad in the *London Review of Books* (18 April 1996), a literary event called “Poetry from Pakistan” was to take place on 17–18 April at which “three formidable writers” Rukhsana Ahmad, Kishwar Naheed and Fahmida Riaz were scheduled to examine “feminism and sexuality,” and where Salman Asif, Iftikhar Arif, Ahmad Faraz, and Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, were to discuss “poetry as a popular form and its social and political context.”

VII

According to the March 1996 issue of *Akhhār-e Urdū* (monthly newsletter put out by the Muqtadira Qaumī Zubān, Islamabad), the Government of India has decided to designate Urdu as the second official language of Andhra Pradesh.

VIII

On 22 October 1994, the National Federation honored Abdul Q. Zia, Professor of History at Laurentian University, Sudbury, Canada (now retired), by presenting him an “Extraordinary Award for his literary contributions and interests in Urdu literature. He received this award at the hands of the Minister for Multiculturalism in Manitoba, Canada.”

Prof. Zia was also “acknowledged” as a “Global Citizen” by the Canadian Committee for the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations.

IX

“An interesting article,” writes our friend Munir Pervaiz in a recent e-mail message, “for your reading pleasure:”

Of Mercenaries and Men of Letters

by Musharraf Ali Farooqi

Gone are the days when the poet and the economist were Cain and Abel. Today they are Siamese twins, living in complete symbiosis with each other. The demands of the former’s profession have made him rely more and more on the latter’s techniques.

Every year from Pakistan and India, hordes of poets board airplanes in the month of October, bound for destinations in North America with the Visit USA ticket stuck between the folds of their passports.

Harassed and bullied by the *mushā'ira* organizers in the US and Canada, these brave and experienced souls show not the least sign of slur on their visage as they go about collecting their knapsacks from the conveyor belts at Toronto, Montreal, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit and New York airports. For they are not here for an adventure unbeknown.

The game plan is simple for these mercenaries of the letters. Organisers in the US and Canada hire a whole lot of poets in India and Pakistan. The rates vary from \$50 to \$100 per *mushā'ira* per *shā'ir*. In exceptional cases, it can go up to \$200 per event. They have fifteen days to truss up their loot and return from whence they came, for the Visit America ticket expires by that time. During this time they shall not indulge in dialogue of any sort with any other organiser, they are expressly told. Any such approach shall be considered a misdemeanour and be punished accordingly. It would be tantamount to the annulment of the contract and the reimbursement of all the expenditure the organiser had incurred on his person.

In Canada at least, the reasons for these precautions are appreciable. Any personal expenditure on the *mushā'ira* can be claimed as a tax-write off. Besides, there is reputation to be made as the guardian angel for home culture, which brings its own fringe benefits. Also, there are too many claimants for the small pie which the Department of Multiculturalism doles out. There are bitter fights for the \$5,000 grant, and seldom is there a good sport. There are whole lobbies of organisers who operate like culture mafias from Toronto and Montreal, from New York and Detroit, from Chicago and Los Angeles. All wait in silence for the first opportunity that comes their way to undermine the other mafia's interests. And woe to the one who falls prey to them.

To say that these poets bring to mind the wandering balladeers from the eighteenth century would not be doing justice to this new creature. The wandering balladeer was a Neanderthal compared to today's *mushā'ira* poet. The present model has greatly improved upon his primate cousin. The muse has not only been broken in but also harnessed with the rudiments of survival knowledge. And no one has put it better than one of these worthies themselves:

hamēsha rizq kā manzar nazar mēñ rakkhā jā'ē

Back to the *mushā'iras*: the tickets for these evenings sell for \$5 to \$10. If you are on an economising campaign and have bought a \$5 ticket, you can rest assured that a samosa will not accompany the tea. Just listen to the *naẓm* or the *ghazal*, finish your cup of tea and retire peacefully to the parking lot. But a ticket bought for \$10 qualifies you for the peace of mind which comes with a samosa in the mouth.

Although your lot is not much different: you listen to the same dead-beat *dōhās*, the same hackneyed *naẓms* and ghazals flowing with the same pretentious zeal from the same old kettles. No one wonders if back home they have stopped producing poets and if these are the only live specimens. There are numerous good poets, both in India and Pakistan who are writing about the contemporary experience. It is about time somebody demanded to know why they are seldom or never heard here.

Mushāʿiras reflect a continuation of the culture in which we live or to which we belong. To leave them to stagnate in the hands of professional organisers would be a sad state of affairs, indeed.

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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*. —*Eds.*