

COMMENTS

Dear Editor:

THE two massive volumes of the new *Annual* (No.15) are a tribute, not just to your editorial ability and industry, which are immense anyway, but also to your flair for motivating competent people to write interesting and thought-provoking articles for the *Annual*.

I read all the main articles in part one with interest, but unfortunately, some I was also obliged to read with growing vexation and mortification. I refer particularly to the pieces by Shantanu Phukan and Tariq Rahman. Both authors have done a lot of hard work, but both are slaves to their preconceived notions and fall into the error that Bertrand Russell warned us all to avoid: the temptation to accept as true what is emotionally desirable to us.

Phukan's piece also suffers from a lack of historical and literary perspective. He is not aware that Rekhta was first a mode of writing, a sort of macaronic verse where a Hindi (what we know as Urdu today) template was used for grafting Persian vocables onto it, or a Persian template was used for grafting Hindi (what we know as Urdu today) onto it. Very nearly all the Urdu poetry in pre-eighteenth century Northern India was in this mode. The mode had nothing whatever to do with "femininity" or "female speech" as such. Apparently Phukan hasn't read a word of Ja'far Zaṭallī (1658?–1713), arch pornographer, macho satirist and ineffable lampoonist. Almost all of Zaṭallī's poetry is in the Rekhta mode. And since Zaṭallī was something of a misogynist too, he must be in stitches within his shroud to know that by virtue of his choice of literary medium, he is being identified with "femininity."

Phukan also cites the *marṣiya* poems of Muḥammad Rafī' Saudā (1706/13–1781) as an example "of the use of Hindi as a feminizing agent in a Persianate environment" (p. 17). He asserts that there is a greater preponderance of *tadbhav* words in the *marṣiya* of Saudā because "the emotions it exploits are quite unambiguously women's feelings." Ergo, "Hindi" or *tadbhav*-based vocabulary in "a Persianate environment" proves the equation: Hindi=Feminine.

Apart from the fact that the use of the term *Hindi* in this context, without specifying that *Hindi* at that time meant what *Urdu* means today, sets up a number of false historical and literary resonances, Phukan does not seem to be aware of the history of the Urdu *marṣiya*. Had he taken a little trouble, he would have

found out that (a) in the beginning the *marṣiya* was meant to be sung publicly, and the audience as well as the singers (except in closed, women’s gatherings about which we know very little yet) were all men, (b) the earliest *marṣiyas* in the North were in the Rekhta mode and had quite a lot of Persian in them, and (c) although all genres of Urdu poetry were at that time more or less oral (that is, meant to be enjoyed primarily through recitation rather than being studied as codex), the *marṣiya* was more oral than others. Were Phukan to read the *marṣiyas* of Mīr, he would find them peppered with arcane Arabic and Persian words as well as colloquialisms. The idea of conferring a gender on a language or a dialect never arose for the Urdu poet at that time.

The linguistic competence of Phukan in Urdu/Hindi/Rekhta and Persian, though not in English, fortunately, ranges from elementary to average. He does not know that *parda’-e purabī* as used by Mukhlīṣ refers to a raga, and not to a geographical or linguistic unit. *Parda* here means “a musical tone or note; the frets of a sitar, or any stringed instrument,” and *purabī* is a *rāgini*.

One of Phukan’s most egregious mistranslations is where he totally mutilates a verse of Afzal’s. Afzal says:

Bivā’i kī nahīn jis shakhṣ kō pīr
Čē dānad dard-e dīgar-rā, arē bīr

Phukan translates:

He who’s never known the pangs of madness
What does that warrior know of other pains? (p. 11)

Phukan does not know that the verse has nothing to do with madness. It turns on a famous proverb: *jis kī pḥaṭī na ho bivā’i voh kyā jānē pīr parā’i*. “Bivā’i pḥaṭnā” is a particularly painful form of chilblains. Only those who have walked barefoot on the freezing North Indian plains of Panjab and Haryana in the winter can understand the agony of it. The word “*bīr*” here means “brother” and has no connection with the clash of arms. The meaning simply is: “One who hasn’t had severe chilblains can’t empathize with another’s pain.”

Phukan does severe injustice to the Indian Sufis by alleging that they were active in converting the Hindus to Islam, and they used “Hindi” for this purpose because “it was a perfect medium for the gradual conversions [sic] of Hindus” (p. 9). I won’t comment on the historical-literary error in this assumption. However I’d like to inform your readers that organized activity with a view to securing conversion is unknown in Islam; the Indian Sufis certainly never practiced it. Over the centuries the Sufis in and around Delhi used Persian for their dis-

courses. It is good for Richard Eaton, as reported by Phukan, that he has now given up his notion that the Sufis used “Hindi-as-an-instrument-of-conversion” (f.n. 10, p. 9). As for Phukan, he is again let down by his linguistic inability and his high regard for his own hobbyhorse. He cites ‘Abdu ’l-Ḥaḡ to the effect that “Hindi Sufi literature was overwhelmingly a literature of conversion, written by élite, Persian-speaking Sufi authors for outreach to the rural Hindus” (pp. 8–9). Unfortunately, Abdu ’l-Ḥaḡ does not say, or even suggest, any such thing. He does not even use the Arabic/Urdu word *tabligh* that could in certain circumstances be used to denote the effort to convert people from one faith to another.

Since organized, missionary-style proselytization is discouraged in Islam, there is no true word in Arabic, Urdu, or Persian for the activity of preaching with a view to securing religious conversion. According to Hans Wehr, the Arabic word *tabligh* means: “To make reach or attain; to take, bring, see that something gets to; to convey, transmit, impart, communicate, report; to inform, notify; tell, let know.”¹ All these meanings are recognized in Urdu, and one can see that “active canvassing, soliciting, preaching, propagation” are not among the word’s senses.

For the Sufi’s discourses and conversations, Abdu ’l-Ḥaḡ uses the phrase *ta’līm-o-talqīn* throughout his book which Phukan is using to claim that, according to Abdu ’l-Ḥaḡ, Sufi literature was overwhelmingly a literature of conversion. Lest someone doubt my linguistic competence about the meaning of the words used by Abdu ’l-Ḥaḡ, here are their definitions from assorted well-known Urdu and Persian dictionaries:

ta’līm: informing, teaching, instructing, tuition (Platts); teaching, instruction, tuition (John Shakespear); teaching, instructing, informing, instruction, tuition (Steingass); tuition, instruction, teaching, (Afzal ‘Ali).

talqīn: instruction, information, instructing, religious instruction, initiation (Platts); instructing, religious instruction (John Shakespear); instructing, informing, making to understand, initiation (Steingass); instructing, informing (Afzal ‘Ali).

There’s no need to point out that none of the definitions denotes or even implies conversion. It might be of interest, however, to cite a couple of relevant instances from the life of Niḡamu ’d-Dīn Auliya’ of Delhi (1242–1325), the most

¹*A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961), p. 73.

influential Indian Sufi of perhaps the entire premodern Indian time. I give extracts from *Favā'idu 'l-Fu'ād* (Morals for the Heart), an authentic record of the conversations of Niẓāmu 'd-Dīn Auliya' collected during his lifetime and vetted by the saint himself:

One of those present asked: "If a Hindu says the profession of faith and calls upon God in His incomparable Unicity and on the Prophet as God's messenger yet remains silent in the company of Muslims, what will be his fate?" The master—may God remember him with favor—replied: "His affair is with God. God will decree what to do, whether to pardon or to punish." In the same vein he remarked, "Some Hindus acknowledge the truth of Islam yet do not become Muslims!"²

On another occasion the Shaikh actually refused to convert someone who was brought before him expressly for that purpose:

A disciple of the master's arrived and brought a Hindu friend with him. He introduced him by saying, "This is my brother." When he had greeted them both, the master—may God remember him with favor—asked that disciple, "And does this brother of yours have any inclination toward Islam?" "It is to this end," replied the disciple, "that I have brought him to the master, that by the blessing of your gaze he might become a Muslim." The master—may God remember him with favor—became teary-eyed. "You can talk to this people as much as you want," he observed, "and no one's heart will be changed, but if you find THE COMPANY OF A RIGHTEOUS PERSON, then it may be hoped that by the blessing of his company the other will become a Muslim."³

I hope Phukan can see the point here: it is not by lecturing and accosting and hectoring that Islam was to be propagated. The good Muslim's example should provide all the incentive that is needed.

Tariq Rahman says, "Urdu ... was promoted through teaching as well as other means by the British in India" (p. 31). Now what is one to make of such a statement? It seems to imply that Urdu was a handmaiden of the British who

²Nizam Ad-Din Awliya, *Morals for the Heart: Conversations of Shaykh Nizam ad-din Awliya Recorded by Amir Hasan Sijzi*, trans. and annotated by Bruce B. Lawrence (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), p. 236.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 285–6. Capitals as in the original.

promoted it because it served their imperialistic purpose. But was that truly the case? Or should one understand that, according to Rahman, Urdu was not flourishing on its own before the British, for their own reasons, imposed it in Bengal in 1835, and somewhat later in Bihar and the then North West Province?

How does Rahman account for the vast proliferation of Urdu poets and literary activity in the Indian South (including Gujarat) from the fifteenth century, and in the Indian North and East from the early eighteenth century? If *tazkiras* are any guide, Urdu writers came from all classes, especially in the North, from the early eighteenth century. Let Rahman glance at some of the early *tazkiras* of Urdu poets and marvel at the number of poets listed there:

- 1754–60, *Riyāz-e Ḥasanī* (185 poets)
- 1761–63, *Āmanistān-e Shu‘arā’* (213 poets)
- 1777–78, *Tazkira-e Shōrish* (319 poets)
- 1798–1812, *Iyaru ‘sh-Shu‘arā’* (949 poets)
- 1801–10, *Umda-e Muntakhaba* (996 poets)
- 1807, *Majmū‘a-e Naghz* (603 poets)

And so on. So where were these poets coming from, and for whom were they writing? The British were certainly in no position, nor inclined, to promote the traditional kind of Urdu poetry or language at that time. They began their efforts at the College of Fort William, and they had a limited purpose before them. One need not go into the details here as they are well known anyway.

It is true that from well into the nineteenth century the British assiduously introduced Urdu into schools and colleges wherever they could do so. Their main purposes were the following: to wean the Muslims away from Arabic and Persian; to weaken the institution of the *madrasa*; and to prepare a docile army of office clerks who could deal with the native population. It is also true, as Rahman says, that the Muslims initially resisted the introduction of Urdu in schools. But the reason for this is the same one which, at almost that very time, was motivating the British academic community to oppose the introduction of English literature as a subject for university instruction and examination. “English,” Terry Eagleton informs us, was then seen as an “upstart, amateurish affair.” He goes on to say:

[S]ince every English gentleman read his own literature in his spare time anyway, what was the point of submitting it to systematic study? Fierce rearguard actions were fought by both ancient universities against this distressingly dilettante subject.... The frivolous contempt for his subject displayed by the first really “literary” Oxford professor, Sir Walter Raleigh,

has to be read to believed.⁴

So if the Muslims weren't all that keen to read Urdu in schools, it was because they saw it as a waste of time, and a poor substitute for the "real" instruction that the British should have offered them. I am surprised at Rahman alleging that Ghālib had a "prejudice against Urdu" (p. 41), and the reason according to him is that Urdu was never "the language of power" (*ibid.*). While the part about Urdu never being the language of power is true, it is quite wrong to suggest that Ghālib was prejudiced against Urdu for this, or for any other reason. It seems the practice of Urdu actually gave Ghālib more, and steadier financial benefit than his undoubted virtuosity in Persian earned for him. It was only a tactical ploy on the part of Ghālib to occasionally claim that he was a Persian poet, and that his Urdu collection was just a "*bērāng*, an outline, a cartoon." (I use the word "cartoon" here as a technical term in painting.)

Rahman is quite right to say that the British generated a sense of identity through language. But that sense of identity was actually generated for the Hindus of the North, so as to alienate them from the Muslims with whom they had shared a common language for centuries. The British produced the rabbit of "Hindi" out of their imperial hat within a space of about ten years. In a talk broadcast over All India Radio, New Delhi, in 1939, Tara Chand said:

...For the Hindus, Lallu ji Lal, Badal Mishra, Beni Narain, and others were ordered [by the authorities at the College of Fort William] to prepare books comprising prose texts. Their task was even more difficult. Braj did exist then as the language of literature, but it had prose barely in name. So what could they do? They found a way out by adopting the language of Mir Amman, [Sher Ali] Afsos, and others, but they excised Arabic/Persian words from it, replacing them with those of Sanskrit and Hindi [that is, Braj, etc.]

...Thus, within the space of less than ten years, two new languages... were decked out and presented [before the public] at the behest of the foreigner. Both were look-alikes in form and structure,... but their faces were turned away from each other ... and from that day to this, we are wandering directionless, on two paths.⁵

⁴*Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 29.

⁵*Hindustani* (New Delhi: Maktaba Jāmi‘a, n.d. (circa 1939), pp. 11–2.

Tara Chand had clearly implied British political motivation in his speech over the Radio; five years later, writing his monograph, *The Problem of Hindustani*, he blamed the misguided “zeal” of some “college professors” at Fort William. His conclusions were, however, the same:

Unfortunately the zeal for finding distinctions led the Professors of the College to encourage attempts to create a new type of Urdu from which all Persian and Arabic words were removed and replaced by Sanskrit words. This was done ostensibly to provide the Hindus with a language of their own. But the step had far-reaching consequences and India is still suffering from this artificial bifurcation of tongues.⁶

Thus Urdu was not an instrument of imperial policy, leading ultimately to the division of the country, as Rahman implies. Urdu was a victim, and a very unwilling victim, of the imperial policy. Indeed, modern Hindi was an instrument, and a willing instrument, of that policy.

Finally, when Rahman says that Urdu was promoted through “teaching as well as other means by the British in India” (p. 31), I’d like to know what “other means” he has in mind. Is he suggesting that the limited system of minor cash awards for morally uplifting books—so well studied by Chaudhri Muḥammad Na‘im⁷—constituted those “other means”? Did the total annual amounts of the awards (and even other “other means”) surpass, or even begin to equal, the value of patronage provided in cash and kind to Urdu writers by the rajas, navabs, lawyers, and well-to-do provincial zamindars until well into the twentieth century?

I was delighted to read Musharraf Farooqi’s Preface to his translation of a substantial portion of the one-volume *Ḥamza*. His erudition sits lightly upon him, as it should, for a creative writer. His enthusiasm for *Hamza* is infectious. His translation also reads smoothly, and its faint archaic air suits the *dāstān* very well.

Farooqi has a crow or two to pluck with Frances Pritchett, and that is quite understandable. Translators don’t often like others’ translations, Pritchett’s own

⁶(Allahabad: Indian Periodicals, Ltd., 1944), pp. 57–8. See also, Dildār ‘Alī Farmān Fathpūrī, *Hindī Urdū Tanāzu’* (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 1977), p. 53.

⁷See his “Naẓīr Aḥmad kā In‘āmī Adab,” in *Tuḥfatū ’s-Surūr* (A.A. Surur Festschrift) (New Delhi: Maktaba Jāmi‘a, 1985), pp. 37–53.

scintillating analysis of some Faiz translations in this issue itself is a case in point. However, since I practically underwrote the authenticity of Pritchett's translation, a few words from me might be in order.

For one thing, Farooqi is displeased with Pritchett's selection of the *Hamza* text for translation. He denies that it is "in the tradition" for it is a late version from a time when the age of *dāstān* narration was quite over (p. 170). He demands to know why the 1871 version, or some other ancient version, was not chosen. He is wrong in believing that the 1969 reprint used by Pritchett is not in the tradition. As we know, this last recension was prepared by 'Abdu 'l-Bārī Āsī. Farooqi believes that it is as recent as 1960. Actually, it cannot be any such thing, for Āsī died in 1946. I don't have a firm date yet for the Āsī recension, but I seem to recall 1922 as a probable date. Anyway, it is from before 1946, obviously.

Though almost entirely confined to rural and unlettered environments, there have been *dāstān* narrators in my part of the country even in the late 1970's. Editions of a volume or two of the *Tilism-e Hōshrubā* are even not unknown from the 1940's. The *dāstān* tradition was certainly not highly visible in the 1920's, but it was not quite dead either. Mīr Bāqir 'Alī, the greatest modern *dāstān* narrator, died in 1928. The choice of the Āsī recension is justified by both its easy availability, and its visibility against a proscenium of nearly two centuries.

Farooqi says that Pritchett (p. 90 of her translation, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), misreads a short narrator's description as a monologue uttered by Amīr Ḥamza. In fact, the tone and the syntax of the brief text in question permit both interpretations, and the choice made by Pritchett is entirely in order.

Lastly, Farooqi rightly objects to a passage in Pritchett (p. 123) as a case of mistranslation. (Ḥamza makes to stab *himself* but Pritchett says that he makes to stab *him*, namely, his opponent). This would be a grievous error, if the translator's error it indeed were. But it is clearly a typo; the word *him* appears in the text instead of *himself* because of a printer's mistake.

— SHAMSUR RAHMAN FARUQI
Allahabad

Dear Editor:

I'M grateful to Shamsur Rahman Faruqi for pointing out an egregious mistake in my note on the earliest extant review of *Umrā'ō Jān Adā*. On page 289 I have wrongly transcribed and translated the couplet printed on the cover of the magazine, *Mi'yār*. The first line should say *bāzār-e Miṣr*, "the market in Egypt," and not *bāzār-r ḥusn*, "the Market of Beauty."

Further, since there is likely to be a long time before another edition of my book, *Zikr-i Mir: The Autobiography of the Eighteenth Century Mughal Poet, Mir Muhammad Taqi 'Mir'* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), comes out, it may be useful to have this brief addendum published now.

Corrections

Page/Line	Published Text	Correction or Addition
28/37	<i>Miriya</i> ,	<i>Mīriyāt</i> ,
140/12	incredible cleaning	obsessive washing
140/43	disciple.	disciple,
174/42	By the time ...	Margins should indicate the start of the quotation
196/42	...in Meerut district, ...	add: [in fact, in Muzaf-farnagar district]
197/46	She could ...	His beloved could ...
208/25	Parihar, G.R. Parihar.	Parihar, G.R.

Also, in the map on p. 24, three place names should be corrected. Please change “Kamau” to “Kaman,” “Kunher” to “Kumher,” and “Banares” to “Benares.”

Additions

1. Two footnotes may be added on p. 174 (*Appendix V*).

1.1. It may be noted that Sauda, who had preceded Mir in the service of Asaf-ud-Daulah, was also the first to write a *shikār-nāma* for the Navab. His poem, however, does not compare well with any of Mir’s three such poems in either magnitude or quality.

1.2. The incident of Asaf-ud-Daulah’s failure to reward Mir Hasan in proper measure is reported by Sher Ali ‘Afsos’, a close friend of Mir Hasan’s, in his preface to the latter’s masterpiece. (See Mir Ghulam Hasan, ‘Hasan’. *Saḥr-al-Bayān*. Rashid Hasan Khan (Ed.). New Delhi: Anjuman-i Taraqqi-i Urdu (Hind), 2000. Pp. 146–47.

2. I recently had the opportunity to consult the British Library manuscript of the second volume of Arzu’s tazkira, *Majma‘-al-Nafā’is* (IO Islamic 3116. Date

of the copy: ca. 1754.). This manuscript was prepared by one Mir Arifullah ‘Vajid’, who describes himself as one of the *shāgirds* of Arzu’s; he also claims to have copied it from the autograph original of the author. A rather hurried reading provided the following diverse pieces of information, relevant to several of the matters discussed in my book.

2.1. The manuscript does not mention Mir. Interestingly, Vajid tells us in his own concluding note that Arzu did not include his, i.e. Vajid’s, verses in the tazkirah since the latter was still a novice poet. This information makes it further doubtful that Arzu could have added a section on Mir.

2.2. The verse, “I return successful ...,” on page 61 of my translation [page 56 of the Persian published text, edited by Abdul Haq] is by Mirza Malik ‘Mashriqi’, who was related to Qasim Yar Khan ‘Qismat’ (folio 164b).

2.3. Arzu himself was at one time in love with someone named Hayat [*Ḥayāt*], at which time he wrote the following verse which makes a play on the man’s name—it means ‘life’.

*Death too did not free me from his love;
I’m dead but remain in Life’s prison.*

Arzu mentions this in the note on one Qazi Muhammad Ghafari, who had been in love with a young man named Sadiq and who made a similar play on words in a *qit‘a* when he broke his hand in a fall caused by his beloved (folio 223a).

2.4. That Arzu had strong anti-Shi’ah feelings becomes more evident when one reads his comments on the Shi’ah martyr Qazi Nur Allah Shustari (folio 243b). I was not aware of these particular remarks when I wrote my own somewhat equivocal conclusions on the matter (p. 15).

2.5. One of Mir’s witty tales deals with the way Persian speakers from Iraq pronounced words that ended in *alif* and *nūn* (p. 137; no. 29). This matter is discussed at some length by Arzu (folios 326b–327a), though without the anecdote that Mir records. It comes up in his section on Mir Yahya ‘Kashi’, who mentions this and other linguistic habits of the people of Kashan in his satire on a glutton. Arzu adds that this particular habit was true for Iraqis too, and also even for those Iranians who came from Shiraz.

2.6. In continuation of the above, Arzu deplures how Iranians from one city could look down upon other Iranians from a different city, and points out that Shirazis made fun of Kashanis, while Isfahanis called Shirazis and Qazvinis fools. He then cites two anecdotes that Mir has also included, only with minor changes,

in his own witty tales (p. 130, no. 3; p. 133, no. 12).

2.7. The anecdote about Imaduddin and Khvaja Shamsuddin Muhammad that Mir quotes (p. 132, no. 7) is found in almost identical words on folio 26b.

The above further throw light on what Mir owed to this particular text by Arzu.

— C.M. NAIM
University of Chicago

Dear Editor:

SOMEONE has sent me a set of photocopies of pages 347 to 350 of your journal (No. 14, 1999) containing one brief letter to the editor from Mr. C.M. Naim and a long one from Mr. Syed Shahabuddin.

I try to avoid any arguments particularly with those whose hobby (if not also profession) seems to be to just opionate and argue. No disrespect meant. It is a lot of fun, just opininating and arguing. I also enjoy it. Oh yes, I do.

However, I have no time for it now as I'm busy actually doing some work for the promotion of education among Muslims in some parts of India. Those who just chatter or scribble about "Muslim education" or "Urdu education" and later "regret" that the data they relied upon for building an edifice of theories was imaginary, can please themselves.

A write-up is enclosed in which I had also done some theorizing and fiction-alizing. After this, I have only sent out reports of actual work done, with some facts and figures about progress or otherwise (progress here, otherwise there) of Muslim education.*

I have enough data on the basis of which ten scholars can each submit a different thesis for Ph. D. and/or write a full book on this or that of Muslim education in India. No "scholar" has shown any interest in all this information. Why should they when imaginary data can be had more easily to support their pet theories?

— A.R. SHERVANI
New Delhi, India

*Mr. Shervani's "write-up" appears elsewhere in this issue. —*Editor*