EVENTS, INQUIRIES, NEWS, NOTICES, REPORTS

A NUMBER of Urdu writers and patrons left us during the past eighteen months, among them: (2002) Abu Jafar Zaidi, Abdul Latif A'zami, Adim Hashmi, Akhtar Aman, Akbar Rehmani, Al-e Ahmad Suroor, Arshadul Qadiri Balyavi, Aziz Asri, Bakhsh Layalpuri, Bashir Ahmad Bashir, Ghulam Rasool Sajid, Ghulamus Saqalain Naqvi, Hasan Rizvi, Hilal Jafri, Hiranand Sooz, Ikram Faruqi, Ismat Javaid, Jafar Abbas, Joan Elia, Kaifi Azmi, Khwaja Hamiduddin Shahid, Musavvir Sabzvari, Naim Siddiqi, Nasrullah Khan, Nazar Zaidi, Ramz Afaqi, Saeed Arfi, Annemarie Schimmel, Sehba Lakhnavi, Sharib Ansari, Surendra Prakash, Taj Saeed, Vishwamittr Aadil; (2003) Gilani Kamran.

I

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

Laurel Steele (United States Foreign Service) gave a paper "An Imperial Education: Urdu Poets Voyage from Colonial India to Pakistan and Beyond" at a workshop on Imperialism and Colonialism held at George Washington University on 16 November 2001.

*

31st Annual Conference on South Asia (Madison, 11–13 October 2002)

Kamran Asdar Ali (University of Texas, Austin): "Reading Pulp Fiction: Domesticity in Contemporary Pakistan."

Amy Bard (Columbia University): "Turning Karbala Inside Out: Regional Stereotypes, Humor, and Popular Shi'ism Among Women."

Syed Akbar Hyder (University of Texas, Austin): "Transforming the Opium into Elixir: Religion, Marxism, and Urdu Progressive Literature."

Karline McLain(University of Texas, Austin): "Tears of Freedom: Recasting Women and the Nation in Wajeda Tabassum's Urdu Short Stories."

Gail Minault (University of Texas, Austin): "Master Ramchandra of Delhi College: Teacher, Journalist, and Cultural Intermediary."

Ali Mir (Monmouth University): "Hai Dasht Ab Bhi Dasht: The Traditions of Progressive Urdu Poetry."

Raza Mir (William Paterson University, New Jersey): "Old Arrows in New Quivers: Javed Akhtar and the Troubled Legacy of Progressive Urdu Poetry."

Maggie Ronkin (Georgetown University): "Speech Actions, Face-Work, and the Self in a Lahori Woman's Personal Experience Narrative."

Saadia Toor (Cornell University): "A Poet, a Nation, a State: Iqbal and the Question of National Identity in Pakistan, 1947–1965."

17th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies (Heidelberg, 9–14 September 2002)

Panel 50: Information Entertainment and Ideologies of Reform: Vernacular Papers, Periodicals and Literary Magazines in Nineteenth-Century India*

Following the spread of print in the Indian vernaculars, from the 1830s the Subcontinent saw the emergence of a host of vernacular papers and journals which were to constitute an increasingly important means for the formation of public opinion and the advancement of knowledge and social reform. Most of these publications combined the function of both newspaper and literary journal, allowing for new ways of broadcasting literature and providing a forum for literary and intellectual discourse. As such they not only catered to the growing demand of the educated Indian readership to be informed and entertained, but also became a crucial medium for voicing indigenous opinion on social, cultural and political matters.

Despite the crucial role that vernacular papers played in the modernization process in nineteenth-century India, research in this area has been very scarce and uneven, with the result that even basic questions remain unanswered. Sometimes already the search for extant issues of a particular journal has caused insurmountable problems. The panel is a first attempt at gathering information about specific journals from different geographical regions of India. By shedding light on various issues such as physical appearance and circulation, style and content, objectives and impact, etc., the hope is to be able, at some future point, to provide a broader picture of the achievements of journals in various Indian languages.

*The following three papers from this panel appear elsewhere in this issue —*Editor.*

Pernau, Margrit (Bielefeld University, Germany): "*Dehlī Urdū Akhbār:* Transformations and Continuities in the Constitution of Public Opinion."

This paper looks at Delhi in the first half of the nineteenth century and tries to locate the emergence of public opinion in the period of transition between the late Mughal Empire and early Colonial rule and between a communication system characterized by the central place of oral transmission and manuscript culture and a system based on mass print culture.

The *Dehlī Urdū Akhbār*, published from Delhi since 1837, was the first newspaper to be written exclusively in Urdu. The aim here is to situate the paper within the tradition of the courtly a*khbārāt* and the earlier Persian newspapers on the one hand, and the contemporary English periodicals on the other hand, in order to gauge how far the transformation of the emerging public sphere has to be seen as a result of British colonial influence and how far it links up with older traditions.

The analysis of the surviving volumes of the *Dehlī Urdū Akhbār* so far located (1840–41, 1853–54) focuses on the following questions:

- What constitutes "news," what topics are chosen for reporting and discussion?
- What constitutes the "political," which events are seen to have political relevance, how are they depicted?
- How are the British integrated into these pre-existing cultural models, how does this integration in turn transform the model?

In a next step this paper tries to locate the emerging print culture in the wider context of the public sphere in Delhi and look for the other spheres in which public opinion was shaped. What impact did these more traditional venues have on the *Dehlī Urdū Akhbār*, how was it situated in the factions predating its existence, how did it in turn react on them?

Finally, this paper turns to the internal evidence for the emergence of a trans-local public sphere, on the one hand through the creation of a common frame of reference and shared knowledge, and on the other hand through the exchange of information and mutual quotation among newspapers.

Minault, Gail (University of Texas, Austin): "The Journalism of Master Ramchandra of Delhi College."

In the generation before the Indian Revolt of 1857, the cultural and literary life of the city of Delhi was rich and vibrant. It was an age that witnessed the flowering of Urdu poetry with the careers of Ghālib, Żauq, and Ẓafar, the emergence of the Urdu political press, and the ferment of religious controversy. It was also a time of intellectual interaction between the new

British rulers and the Mughal service elites of North India (whether Hindu or Muslim), who still retained their administrative and cultural importance.

The institution of learning that both contained that intellectual interaction and abetted the flowering of literature and the press was Delhi College. This institution had two sections, a *madrasa* and a college with a Western curriculum, but its chief innovation was that all subjects, whether Oriental or Western, were taught in the vernacular, Urdu. This required collaboration between the European administrators and the Indian teachers and students at the college to translate and publish texts on scientific and literary subjects. The college established its own press that published not only textbooks but also periodicals containing articles about contemporary developments in science and technology and international events, and serialized translations of popular works of literature and biography.

The chief figure in the development of the periodicals that issued from the Delhi College press in the 1840s and 1850s was Master Ramchandra, the mathematics professor at the college. A North Indian Kayastha, Ramchandra rose from a relatively humble background to achieve renown both as a mathematician and, especially, as an Urdu stylist known for his clear, unpretentious prose. He edited two of the journals published by the college: *Muḥibb-e Hind,* a monthly scientific and literary journal, and *Favā'idu 'n-Nāẓirīn*, a weekly newspaper. In the pages of these periodicals, Ramchandra made Western innovations in science and technology available to the literate public of North India, but also articulated an ideology of reform that involved openness to knowledge from wherever it issued. Ramchandra had a voracious intellect that reflected the ideas that were being discussed at the college and among the intellectuals in Delhi at the time. This paper discusses the contents of the Delhi College periodicals and Ramchandra's contribution to Urdu journalism and public opinion.

Stark, Ulrike (University of Heidelberg): "Politics, Public Issues and the Promotion of Urdu Literature: *Avad^h Akhbār*, the First Urdu Daily in Northern India."

Launched in 1858 by the famous Lucknow publisher and print-capitalist Munshi Newal Kishore, the *Avad^h Akhbār* was one of the most influential and long-lived Urdu papers in northern India. It was also the first Urdu journal to go daily in 1877. This paper sketches the growth of the *Avad^h Akhbār* from bimonthly to daily and analyzes the various factors accounting for its popularity and commercial success. It explores the journal's claim to be a "modern" newspaper which, emulating English models, covered local, national and international news, thereby introducing the vernacular reading public to new concepts of informational culture while retaining some of the features of traditional newswriting. Against the backdrop of the criticism

frequently raised against the *Avad*^{h} *Akhbār,* on account of its loyal, allegedly "anti-nationalist" stance, the extent and implications of colonial patronage are also discussed. In focusing on several political and social reform issues, this paper tries to show how the *Avad*^{h} *Akhbār* in fact was walking the tightrope between support of the government and a self-styled role of representing "native" opinion and public grievances.

Focusing on the illustrious range of editors and contributors to the *Avad*^{h} *Akhbār*, in its second part this paper examines the journal's role in promoting Urdu literature and in providing a forum for discourse for the Urdu literary élite. Through the example of Ratan Nāt^{h} "Sarshār" and his famous Urdu novel *Fasāna-e Āzād*, published in installments in *Avad*^{h} *Akhbār* from 1878 onward, this paper discusses how new publication modes engendered by print culture entailed a new and highly successful genre of "serialized literature." In combining entertainment with issues of social and political relevance, this serialized literature reflected contemporary reading tastes while also encouraging new forms of reader-writer interaction.

[Report filed by Christina Oesterheld and edited for the *AUS*.]

Other:

Barbara Metcalf (University of California, Davis): presented "Urdu in India in the 21st Century: A Historian's Perspective" at the international seminar Agenda for Urdu Education in 21st Century India (New Delhi, February 2002).

Kelly Pemberton (University of California, Berkeley): presented "Whither Urdu? Language, Community, and Power in India Today" at the international seminar Agenda for Urdu Education in 21st Century India (New Delhi, February 2002).

Laurel Steele (University of Chicago and United States Foreign Service): read her paper "Wordsworth and Urdu Poetry: Rewriting 'Nechar' into the Critical Landscape" at the conference Wordsworth's "Second Selves": The Poetic Afterlife, 1798–2002 (Lancaster, England, July 2002), and another paper "An Urdu Poet Rereads Hamlet: Polonius and the Post-Colonial" at the conference Colonial, Imperial, and Post-Colonial Shakespeares held at Kent State University in November 2002.

II

Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, the distinguished Urdu critic, poet, and short story writer, was awarded an honorary doctorate by Aligarh Muslim University.

III

Stephanie Lonsdale is a doctoral student at the University of Barcelona, Spain. After completing a Postgraduate course in Postcolonial Studies, she became interested in South Asian, particularly Pakistani, literature as it appeared to be an area of academic interest that was relatively unexplored in the West. Ms. Lonsdale is now doing research on Pakistani literature for her Minor Thesis which will form part of a larger study on literature to be published in Madrid. Her work encompasses the 55 years of Pakistani literature from Partition to the diaspora. She is particularly interested in the work of Sa'adat Hasan Manto and would welcome any correspondence about this writer.

IV
Language Divide

Akhtar Hasan Khan

In Pakistan, there is a policy (determined by the élite) which divides those who study in English-medium institutions and those who study in Urdu- or Sindhi-medium institutions. Firstly, Pakistan has the lowest literacy rate among South Asian countries and, on top of that, all those studying in its educational institutions are divided into several categories. About 70 percent of the matriculates who pass out each year study in Urdu- or Sindhi-medium schools, and the remaining 30 percent study in English-medium schools. Scientific and professional post-matriculation education is mainly in English, except for bachelor's and master's degrees. Students who have been to Urdu-medium schools find it very difficult to switch over to English for professional or scientific education. On the other hand, students who have been to English-medium schools find it much easier. Entrance examinations for professional colleges are also conducted in English, thus giving an edge to English-medium students.

A knowledge of fluent spoken and written English is indispensable for all good jobs in the public and private sectors. The bias towards English language in multinational or national banking and industrial enterprises is explainable, but the strong bias towards English in the Central Superior Services (CSS) Examination, conducted by the Federal Public Service Commission, is totally cruel and unexplainable. In the CSS examination, there are two papers, one in which candidates are required to write an essay in English, the other in which they are tested for their knowledge of the English language. A score of 38 percent or less on either of these two papers disqualifies the candidate from participating in the interview process.

Obviously, a student who has studied in an English-medium school and college has a far better chance of doing well on these two compulsory papers.

The bias is more pronounced in the interview, which is also conducted in English. A student who has not heard proper English being spoken, either at home or in the classroom, is highly unlikely to be fluent in answering questions

in English in a short half-hour period. Hence, our top bureaucracy is almost totally drawn from those 30 percent who matriculate in English.

The tragedy is that the cream of English-speaking students, drawn mostly from urban areas and expensive private schools, migrate abroad when they get a chance. The second-class English-medium students are manning our top bureaucracy, while the first-class students of Urdu-medium schools and colleges are languishing as teachers or clerks.

India has followed a totally different policy for conducting its Services Examination. Indian students can appear in English as well as about eight regional languages, including Urdu, if they choose them in preference to English. It is indeed ironic, to say the least, that Urdu is allowed as a medium for ICS exams in India but is not allowed in Pakistan, although it is our national language. It is no wonder that the son of an unskilled boatman from Tamil Nadu can become the President of India, whereas it is impossible to think that the son of a boatman from Karachi could occupy Islamabad's presidential palace.

The greatest harm which the language divide has done, and continues to do, is to kill equality of opportunity. Practical philosophers have realized that complete equality of income and status is not feasible. However, it has been emphasized and proved in practice that no nation can progress without creating equality of opportunity for all its citizens. Without vertical mobility, broad-based progress is impossible. Equality of opportunity is at its best in the United States, where Bill Gates, starting from scratch, could acquire assets of more than $50 billion. Where a self-made President Clinton could get far more votes and acclaim than a silver-spooned Bush. Where the graduates of Harvard Medical School have to pass the same examination as the graduates of Bahawalpur Medical College. The United States gives equal opportunities not only to its citizens, but also to talented people from all over the world and, consequently, it is the world's leader in technology.

Pakistan's economic performance had been far better than India's till the 1990s. During the last decade, the technological and the consequent economic gap between India and Pakistan has been increasing day by day. Whereas India, according to the latest Human Development Report, has climbed into the middle-income group of countries, Pakistan is still languishing in the low-income group. One measure of the technological gap between India and Pakistan is that whereas India's software exports amount to more than $6 billion, Pakistan's are less than $100 million.

The language divide in Pakistan is one of the main factors hampering our technological and economic growth. Not only do we desperately need to improve the quantity and quality of our education, we must also narrow the language divide which has been created by Pakistan's ruling élite for its own selfish purposes.

[Thankfully reproduced from *Dawn* (Internet Edition, Magazine Section) 29 September 2002. Edited for the *AUS*.]

*

Telling Lies

Intizar Husain

With a new collection of tales in front of me, I feel like the proverbial blind man who found, to his surprise, that the creature accidentally under his foot happened to be a quail. For this surprise I should be thankful to Rakhshanda Jalil, who has translated into English these Hindi tales told by the distinguished writer Asghar Wajahat, in a different way. I'm grateful to her for taking the trouble to send me a copy through a circuitous route (Delhi–London–Lahore) because of the strained relations between India and Pakistan which have affected the smooth flow of mail between the two countries.

As for the tales in the book, it would be best to first offer glimpses of a few of them. And since they are brief and pithy, I might as well quote them in full. One tale runs thus:

Hariram: Gurudev, is Pakistan our enemy?
Guru: Yes, child, it is our enemy.
Hariram: What does Pakistan want?
Guru: It wants to destroy us.
Hariram: And what do we want, Gurudev?
Guru: We want to destroy Pakistan.
Hariram: Then we are friends, not enemies, Gurudev.
Guru: How, Hariram?
Hariram: We have the same intentions, Gurudev.

Another goes:

Guru: Tell me the mark of a developed country, Hariram?
Hariram: Developed countries do not make cloth, Gurudev.
Guru: What do they make, then?
Hariram: They make weapons.
Guru: How do they cover their nakedness?
Hariram: Their weapons cover their nudity.

And here is one more story told in the same vein:

Hariram: Gurudev, are all Muslims terrorists?

Guru: Yes, my child. They do all manners of violent acts, breaking and destroying things.

Hariram: Why do they do that, Gurudev?

Guru: Because violence is in their blood, my child.

Hariram: Why is violence in their blood, Gurudev?

Guru: Must be the will of Bhagwanji. He must have put it inside them.

Hariram: But the Muslims do not believe in Bhagwanji. They believe in Allah.

Guru: Then it must be the will of Allah.

Hariram: But we don't believe in Allah.

Guru: Never mind, then … it must be our will.

Such are the tales told by Asghar Wajahat who is known as a leading writer of Hindi fiction. He has written novels, short stories, stage plays, street-theater plays, TV documentaries and film scripts. This technique of telling a tale tempts me to call these tales modernized Upanishads because they borrow a technique from them. In the Upanishads we observe seekers of knowledge—generally young—going to a series of sages asking questions in their quest for knowledge. In response, each sage puts a question of his own—a very simple and easy question—and follows it up with another, and another. But the inquiring young souls quickly find out that the sage's questions are not as simple or easy as they first appear. In the end, we see some great truth revealed to the complete satisfaction of the seeker.

Asghar Wajahat has borrowed these two traditional characters of the seeker and the sage from the Upanishads for a purpose all his own, a purpose which is very different from that of the Upanishads. There, the young pupils and the wise old *rishis* are both preoccupied with questions of cosmic or metaphysical import. Here, the writer's problems arise out of contemporary social concerns. In an attempt to bring out the bitter truths of our times, he employs this dialogue technique which was devised by ancient *rishis* to bring home cosmic realities and metaphysical truths to the pupils who sat at their feet. And while the *rishis* talk seriously and serenely, the writer here has chosen to be satirical and critical, his chief target being contemporary politicians. He has a reason for it. "Of all forms of public life," he says "politics has the greatest number of successful mediocre people because politics draws its sustenance from the sweat and blood of the common man. And as we say in Hindi, all thieves are first cousins. So politics, or the political arena, is where I find the most grist to [*sic*] my mill." The following tale will explain his point of view better.

Hariram: Gurudev, what will the simple man do if he sees two dogs fighting over a bone?

Guru: He will try to mediate between them.

Hariram: And what will the clever man do?

Guru: He will run off with the bone.
Hariram: And what will the politicians do?
Guru: He will let loose two more hungry dogs on the scene.

And here another tale that shows the callousness of Indian politicians:

Hariram: Gurudev, how can riots be stopped forever?

Guru: Child, the whole nation cannot answer this question for you. Not even the president or the prime minister, the entire cabinet of ministers, the intelligentsia—no one has an answer.

Hariram: Gurudev, man has reached the moon, conquered the universe, everything that was impossible till yesterday has become possible today. Why can't we entrust our scientists with the task of finding out how communal riots can be eradicated forever.

Guru: Child, scientists were put on the job but they said this was a religious issue.

Hariram: Were the religious people then put on the job?
Guru: Yes, they were, but they said this was a social issue.
Hariram: What did the sociologists have to say?
Guru: They said it was a political issue.
Hariram: So what did the politicians say?
Guru: They said it was a non-issue.

This is how Asghar Wajahat tells these tales—or rather, mini-tales—in an eminently satirical vein. And in the telling he is never extravagant. He seems to excel in the art of saying big things in the fewest possible words. That is what makes these tales so powerful. The title of the book, too, is no less satirical: *Lies Half-Told*.

[Gratefully reproduced from *Dawn* (Internet Edition, Magazine Section) 13 October 2002. Edited for the *AUS*.]

*

He Could See It Coming

Intizar Husain

Khalid Hasan has, in his column in a Lahore magazine, chosen the right moment to refer to a prophetic story written by Ghulam Abbas. In fact, we all should stand up in homage to him for foretelling a situation which started actualizing long after his death with the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

I need not go into the details of the story as it has already been summarized by Khalid Hasan. I, too, had tried to summarize it in a piece published on 1

November 1998, at a time when we were under threat from Nawaz Sharif's Shariat Bill.

I vividly remember the historic evening when Ghulam Abbas came from Karachi, took tea with us in the Pak Tea House, and then proceeded to the *Ḥalqa-e Arbāb-e Żauq* to read his new story. I am talking about the late 1960s. Those were the days when people in Pakistan were sharply divided between socialists or Islamic socialists and Islam-*pasands*. Ghulam Abbas was neither. In fact, he did not believe that a writer could indulge in politics. His stories will bear testimony to this. So we least expected from him a kind of story that would add fuel to the fire of ideological politics.

The story presented was titled "Dʰanak" (Rainbow). In Khalid Hasan's English translation it has been titled "Hotel Moen-Jo-Daro." The hotel in the story is the place where foreign delegates are staying and are waiting for some news to break. They are told that a spaceship launched by Pakistan has landed on the moon. That shows Pakistan's astounding achievements in the field of scientific research. But a mullah delivering a sermon in a mosque in a little village condemns it as an act of sacrilege, something not in accordance with the Shariat.

The mullah's protest soon gathers momentum and turns into a movement, leading to the fall of the government. The mullahs come into power. In their zeal for reform, they go to the extreme. All universities, colleges and schools are closed, giving place to religious schools (*madaris*). Female education is banned. Women are ordered to sit at home, strictly observing purdah. The banking system grinds to a halt. All relations—economic, political, cultural, etc.—are cut off with foreign countries.

Radio, television, theater halls and cinema houses are converted into *madaris*. Literature is condemned, more particularly fiction. And so on and so forth.

But soon sectarian differences crop up. The mullahs find themselves in warring camps known as *Sabzpōsh*, *Surkhpōsh*, *Nīlīpōsh.* The sharpening of differences leads to bloodshed. The situation provides the enemy with an opportune moment to attack Pakistan.

The story ends with a scene showing a camel caravan crawling through a desert. A guide is seen pointing to some ruins and saying that these are the remains of a sky-high building once known as Hotel Moen-Jo-Daro, the historic place from where the landing of Pakistan's first spaceship on the moon was announced.

The recital of the story was to be followed by a discussion. However, the discussion could not take place. As the story ended, there were loud protestations from the audience. Islam-*pasand* intellectuals were in a state of fury. They were challenged by the socialist intellectuals. That led to a riotous scene. Ghulam Abbas sat bewildered, not knowing what to do. Seeing the protesters in a threatening mood, a few old *Ḥalqa*-wallahs took positions around him and, with much difficulty, escorted him out.

The story was long enough to fill a volume. It was published in 1969 along with a brief foreword by the author in which he tried to clarify his position in a few words. He tells us that while writing the story he could hardly imagine that within the next two years man would be able to land on the moon. He also thought it fit to explain that, being a follower of Iqbal, he never aligned himself with any sect. "I regard myself just one from among the *Millat-e Islāmiya*. Only in this capacity I have felt some apprehensions with regard to the future of the *Millat*, which have been expressed here in the form of a story."

Ghulam Abbas confessed his ignorance only to the extent of landing on the moon. But there were so many things he did not know at the time he was writing this story. He could hardly have foreseen the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan or of the sectarian attacks on mosques in Pakistan. Even Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization came late in his life. The story was written in 1967 and Ghulam Abbas died in November 1982. Fundamentalism was not yet in sight. Only his foresight could help him see what was to come in later years. His portrayal of the mullahs' regime reads like a realistic account of what happened in Afghanistan under the Taliban. And how graphically he depicts terrorist attacks inspired by sectarianism, as if he were seeing everything that was destined to happen in the days to come.

Under the present circumstances, the story demands to be read once again, read and re-read. Beware of what the storyteller tells you.

[Thankfully reproduced from *Dawn* (Internet Edition) 10 November 2002. Edited for the *AUS*.]

*

NOTE: 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.*