

This Issue of the *Annual*

AS WE GO TO PRESS, it is hard to dispel the pall that hangs ominously over the future of the *AUS*. Our main financial support came from the University of Wisconsin in the form of a 33 percent-time Project Assistant who shouldered the responsibility of providing all and sundry services for the *Annual*. When a few years ago the University was forced to terminate its support in the midst of a mounting financial crisis, we were lucky to find a considerate patron in the American Institute of Pakistan Studies (AIPS). It is with a deep sense of gratitude that the *AUS* acknowledges the support it has received uninterruptedly for four years from the AIPS in the form of a 50 percent-time appointment for an Assistant Editor. Unfortunately—again because of a financial squeeze—the AIPS informed us last October that starting the following year it would not be able to continue that level of support; instead, it would only be able to provide \$4000 annually toward the publication of the journal and we would need to look elsewhere for additional funding. All efforts to tap into the University's other resources, such as the Humanities Institute, the different area studies centers, and even beyond the University of Wisconsin into other Centers for South Asia nationally, failed.

This failure obliged us to look beyond institutional support to the larger Urdu community. A vigorous fund-raising campaign was launched to reach out to as many well-wishers of Urdu humanities as possible, and the Editor personally contacted many individuals soliciting their consideration and support. Although this didn't bring us anywhere close to the targeted amount, many people did contribute what they could, some most generously, and quite a few also actively sought to inform others of the plight of the *AUS* through personal contacts and by posting appeals on behalf of the *Annual* in their blogs. Thankfully, enough funds were collected to make the current issue, our 25th, possible.

However, the future of the *AUS* is far from secured. Whether it will continue beyond its current issue is, at this point, uncertain. The cost of a

half-time salary and benefits for the Assistant Editor is not the only expense, though it is the largest and most crucial. We can manage the rest of the expenses from sales of the *Annual* and from the Editor's personal resources, but the salary/benefits for the Assistant Editor, although not in the realm of impossibility, is certainly beyond any one individual's ability to contribute. We need between 22 and 24 thousand dollars a year to continue publishing, of which \$4000 from the AIPS may be considered the only committed sum.

So, as we go to press with a fair amount of trepidation that this may be the issue with which the *AUS* fades into the sunset, we also cherish the hope that all those who are concerned about Urdu literature and culture will assume the responsibility to keep this publication alive.

The Editor owes a special note of thanks to Ajmal Kamal, editor of the most significant Urdu literary journal, *Āj* (Karachi). Despite his knowledge of the *AUS*'s uncertain future, he has warmly offered to bring out a South Asian edition of the *Annual* starting with this issue. This is like a dream come true. Ever since the *AUS* moved to Madison, Wisconsin, we have ardently cherished the desire to also publish just such an edition for our readers in South Asia—the home of Urdu—who simply cannot afford to subscribe to it even at its minimal U.S. price. This was the reason a free-of-charge web edition was launched in 2001 at our extra expense—a decision that drastically, indeed adversely, affected the potential for sales of the print edition. □

M.U.M.