

## This Issue of the *Annual*

### FRIENDS!

We are sorry to announce that this is the last, and much abbreviated, issue of the *AUS* under the present editors. As we approach our sunset, we do so hoping that an experienced and energetic academic at some other university might find the means to ensure its continuation, just as we did here at the University of Wisconsin-Madison when, in 1990, its former editor, C.M. Naim, decided to cease publication after seven issues. To our knowledge, this is the only English-language publication on or about Urdu humanities anywhere in the world. That it should be continued hardly needs to be said. Since its move to Madison in 1993, the *AUS* has gradually built up a reputation as the leading journal in the field of Urdu studies. The diversity of scholars who have contributed to its pages from across the globe in itself attests to this. Its articles, translations, and so on, are regularly cited in scholarly publications, and requests for permission to reprint individual items have never ceased coming. It is indexed by the *Bibliography of Asian Studies*, EBSCO Database Services (*Current Abstracts*, *TOC Premier EBSCO*, *Humanities International Complete* and *Humanities International Index*), the *IBZ* (Internationale Bibliographie der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Zeitschriftenliteratur), the *Internationale Bibliographie der Rezensionen Wissenschaftlicher Literatur*, *MLA Abstracts of Articles in Scholarly Journals*, and the *MLA International Bibliography of Books and Articles on the Modern Languages and Literatures*, and is available in many of the major university libraries in Europe, North America, Australia, Japan, and India.

Whenever possible, we have assembled special sections to introduce the work of Urdu writers and critics (Naiyer Masud, Hasan Manzar, Muhammad Hasan Askari) who seldom receive notice or mention in the Western critical discourse on Urdu. We have also encouraged and welcomed submissions from students. As an innovation, an Urdu section was added to the *Annual* some years ago to provide a venue for Urdu writers

working in the West, which often also included the work of South Asian contributors. And all this (from editing to formatting, from mailing to book-keeping to management of the web edition and, during these last few years, to fund-raising) by a team of just two individuals working part-time.

The painful decision to part company with this worthy publication was necessitated almost entirely by the precarious situation of its finances. The amount generated by the sale of the journal was barely enough to cover the day-to-day expenses and the cost of printing. Our print circulation was never much to speak of, especially in South Asia where there would be most interest but little money for ordering publications from overseas. What further cut into sales was the decision to make it freely available on the Internet in order to increase the availability of the *Annual* for these overseas readers. Although this did considerably increase the number of readers—with thousands of visits to the web-site edition every month from all over the world—it also caused some paid subscribers to cancel their subscriptions, including a few university libraries. The price of the *AUS* (minus postage) has remained constant since 1993: \$18 for individuals and \$35 for institutions, an unbelievably low price for a scholarly journal. For this price the number of pages generally remained between 300 and 400, and once even went up to 700. The production and posting of the web edition was an extra expense, but since the intent of the *AUS* was never to generate profit, only to disseminate Urdu scholarship as widely as possible, we decided to take the loss. We also put all the back issues since the journal's arrival in Madison on the web and linked to the web edition of the first seven issues produced at the University of Chicago. It remains to be seen whether we can find a way to keep the web edition available indefinitely.

In the earliest phase, financial support came from the University of Wisconsin's Center for South Asia. Later, Sargent Bush, John Bascom Professor of English and Assistant Dean of the College of Letters and Science, negotiated with the Graduate School to offer the Editor a thirty-three-percent-time project assistant, but after some years the growing strain on the University's financial resources resulted in the elimination of that position. Meanwhile, thankfully, the American Institute of Pakistan Studies, which had been supporting us with small grants for a number of years, agreed to provide the salary for a half-time Assistant Editor. However, after a few years, in 2010, AIPS too was forced—owing to severe cuts in its own grant—to reduce its support to a few thousand dollars. We were nonetheless able to struggle on until this year thanks to the generous donations of a number of individuals and organizations, in both the South Asian expatriate community and beyond.

We would be remiss if we did not especially acknowledge the debt of gratitude we owe to the Center for South Asia, the College of Letters and Science and the Graduate School of the University, the American Institute of Pakistan Studies, as well as those individuals who repeatedly came to our assistance with very substantial donations, especially Rajeev Kinra, Kamal Abdali, Ian Bedford, and Moazzam Siddiqi, and with fund-raising, especially Tahira Naqvi and Syed Saeed Naqvi.

Special thanks are also owed to Barry Carlsen and Eileen Fitzgerald of the University's Communications and Marketing Office. They have always gone well beyond our expectations in assisting us to produce the best possible printed edition of the *Annual* each year.

Profound gratitude is also due to Dr. Christina Oesterheld (Heidelberg University) and Dr. Elena Bashir (University of Chicago) who helped the editors immensely by willingly contributing their expertise in evaluating a number of submissions for the *Annual*.

While the print edition will cease with this issue, we will keep all the issues on the web as long as possible, but there will likely come a time when the web edition of volumes 8–29 too will end. Volumes 1–7 will continue to be available online at the Digital South Asia Library (University of Chicago).

Finally then, a special thank-you and farewell to all of you, our readers and friends, for your interest and support over these last twenty plus years. □

M.U.M.

J.A.S.