

CONFERENCE PAPER

Urdu Teaching at Bamberg University

THE CHAIR OF MODERN INDOLOGY at Bamberg University was set up at the end of 1990 as part of the section for Oriental Studies within the Faculty of Linguistics and Literature. The staff consists of a professor, a research assistant, and a foreign language assistant. Whether the chair will be retained is unclear at the moment as from October this year the present staff will be taking up similar posts at the South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University.¹

The main language taught in Bamberg is Hindi, with Sanskrit and Urdu as additional languages. Bengali was offered sporadically as 1–2 week intensive course whenever a teacher became available. Hindi and Urdu are taught by me.

From the very beginning we have had very few students—from one to three each year. At present there are eight students in all, three of whom have Indology as their main subject.

The primary problem in the teaching of Urdu has been the lack of adequate teaching materials for Urdu in German. The very little that was available was impractical or hopelessly outdated. I have had to improvise with the help of books from England (Russell, Matthews, and Shackle) and the U.S.A. (Naim, Bender, Barker et al.). The university library is inadequately equipped to meet the needs of beginning Urdu students. Most books (such as those for Urdu language instruction and on literature, both in Urdu and in other languages) are not available, either

¹ In a recent letter (3 August 1995) Ms. Huttemann informs the editors of the *AUS*:

For your information, the chair of Modern Indology at Bamberg University no longer exists, an extremely regrettable fact. As I mentioned in my report, the entire staff there now teaches at the South Asian Institute of Heidelberg University.

because they have yet to be ordered or because they have not been catalogued due to a lack of personnel competent in the Urdu script. Students are for the most part dependent on handouts. For translations at the intermediate level students have to depend on Urdu-English and English-Urdu dictionaries, for to the best of my knowledge there is no Urdu-German or German-Urdu dictionary.

Another difficulty is the lack of communication among colleagues teaching Urdu elsewhere in Germany. With the exception of the South Asia Institute in Heidelberg, I have no idea where else Urdu is being taught in this country. The present conference will certainly facilitate communication among colleagues and provide a forum for discussing mutual problems.

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