

This Issue of the *Annual*

THIS ISSUE OF THE ANNUAL has been slightly delayed, for which I wish to express my sincere apologies. The untimely death of Professor Ahmed Ali on 14 January 1994 overtook us just as we were putting this issue together. His passing away was not merely the departure of an age—an age which valued human relationships and stood for all that was good and noble in life—it was the loss for me personally of a valued friendship. Frankly, he is often alleged to have been arrogant and unyielding at times, but no matter how far I care to go back in my memory, I fail to find a personal corroboration of this allegation. I remember him only as a magnanimous man, giving, nurturing, gentle, who walked with a sense of beauty and culture.

Such a man no doubt deserves to be remembered, especially when he remained largely unappreciated in his adopted country. And remembered in a tribute befitting his accomplishments, his genius. Rather than put off this tribute to the 1995 issue of the *Annual*, I decided to include it in the present one. Hence the delay, caused mainly by the difficulty of gathering the pertinent materials. Perhaps this is the right place to acknowledge the great debt of gratitude I owe to Professor Ahmed Ali's son, Orooj Ahmed Ali, and to my friend and colleague, Prof. Carlo Coppola of Oakland University. Orooj provided me with photocopies of several pages from Professor Ahmed Ali's manuscripts, some obituary notices that appeared in Pakistani and Indian newspapers following his father's death, and an assortment of photos from the family's collection. He was also helpful in supplying me with information for a Curriculum Vitae. Prof. Coppola, on short notice, wrote an obituary and also finalized his translation of Muhammad Hasan Askari's seminal Urdu article on *Twilight in Delhi* as well as the text of that portion of his comprehensive interview that focuses on this novel. He also unhasitatingly lent me his copy of the Urdu translation of this novel—inscribed by the author for him in Urdu.

Confronted by the end of a valued life, the eye sees only what was good and enduring in that life. The occasion calls for a tribute. Quite unabashedly then, what follows is just that—a tribute. There will be other occasions for the critical assessment of Professor Ahmed Ali's literary contributions.

From the couple of dozen letters which I received from Professor Ahmed Ali over the last twenty-five years, I decided to include only three in the "Tribute," one of which with a paragraph I have left out due to its very personal content.

Moving on to some of the other items in this issue of the *Annual*, first and foremost I would like to express our deepest regrets for the calamity that befell Prof. David Lelyveld's article in our last issue. In *al-Hawāmil wa 'sh-Shawāmil*, a collection of questions by Abū Ḥayyān at-Tauḥīdī and responses by Ibn Miskawaih, the former asks why is it that animals, in prolonged human company, begin to acquire the traits of their keepers. I shall not bother with Ibn Miskawaih's response, but I will say this: even computers and software are not impervious to acquisition by osmosis. They get their cue from their operators and develop their own quirks, a whimsicality, indeed a personality all their own. Let's just say we ignored this fact. We have therefore decided to reprint "*Zubān-e Urdū-e Mu'allā* and the Idol of Linguistic Origins," we hope error-free this time. This is the very least we could do.

There were also a few typographical errors, some of them critical, among which "*tarāsh-kē dēkh*" for "*tarash-kē dēkh*" (p. 182) in "Parveen Shakir: A Note and Twelve Poems." C.M. Naim, please accept our apologies.

In 1974, during an interview with Intizar Husain, I asked him several times about his birth date, and he repeatedly evaded the issue. Time, according to his reckoning, was never so definitive. One dated births and deaths not by the reckoning of a calendar but, rather, by reference to events, like, for instance, "right around the time of the *ghadar* (the Indian war of freedom from the British Raj; 1857)" or, "I must have been in ninth or tenth grade when Allama Iqbal passed away." Of course Intizar knew his birth date. He just wanted to get a cultural point across. But the realities of today, when the value of much of our scholarship is beholden to footnotes and other formal aides, are different. One constant handicap which I have felt in my work—and I'm sure others have too—is the irritating absence of a standard reference work or biographical dictionary in which one could verify the dates of a writer. A substantial number of pages in this issue is devoted to just such a work, for which job—tedious

and largely thankless, not to say dry and dreary—sincere thanks, mine as well as yours, go to Shamsur Rahman Faruqi and Frances W. Pritchett. But before you spot a mistake, and go on the attack, please remember that the compilers are aware of the tentative nature of their work and its potential shortcomings. They don't claim it to be definitive. Think of their effort as a collaborative one, and point out the errors to me. I will publish an addendum in a subsequent issue of the *Annual* when enough corrections have been collected.

While on a brief but much-needed vacation in California, Prof. Shahid Hameed of Lahore accepted my request to do a review of Dr. Jameel Jalibi's *Qaumi English-Urdu Dictionary*, thus sacrificing the better part of that well-deserved vacation. Many thanks.

Faruq Hassan writes in his review of M.H.K. Qureshi's *An Anthology of Modern Urdu Poetry*: "Translating poetry is a formidable job, even more so when attempted between languages as culturally and linguistically disparate as Urdu and English." He makes a strong case against overly literal translation. D.J. Matthews, on the other hand, has attempted "a parallel English translation [of Iqbal], which has been made as literal as possible, without, however, forcing the English syntax." And his reviewer Shamsur Rahman Faruqi feels that he has eminently succeeded in his efforts, for the translations "read like good English texts in their own right." When Estelle Dryland, who has done much to promote Urdu in Australia, sent us her translations of contemporary Urdu poems, I felt they could have benefited from a bit more literalness. Although I selected a piece, I wrote to her about my reservation. In a cogently argued response, she defended her method. There is much of value in her letter, so I decided to do two things: one, include, with her permission, the relevant portions of our correspondence in the Letters to the Editors section; and two, print the original poem alongside her translation.

No matter how foreign a work from a culture radically different than one's own, it jealously preserves within its core an element of transcendence, which nurtures all. Smiles at all. Indeed belongs to all. All the more reason why those who stand outside a given language can sometimes offer insights which may elude "insiders." Jason Francisco—in spite of his extreme reluctance "to intrude"—looks at Mir in a refreshingly personal way. And we are the richer for it.

Sagaree Sengupta's delightful enterprise enlivens the issue no less. No *gul-o-bulbul* here, but her poem does show what happens when one writes a *ghazal* in English: you end up in soup!

Finally, to cut costs to keep the *Annual* alive, the responsibility of the editors extends beyond just editing the submissions, to the preparation of the camera-ready copy, from which the printer merely runs the desired number of copies and then binds them. In a part of our task we have been immensely helped by my colleague in the Departments of German and Linguistics here, Prof. Donald Becker. He has often bailed us out at critical times with his expertise in computers, especially in the area of font generation and modification. I would like to record here our indebtedness to him.

We hope you will find this second issue from Madison just as pleasing and enjoyable as the previous one.

M.U.M.