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Urdu & I

**Learning Urdu: The Indian Army and After, 1942–46,
and SOAS, 1946–49**

MY LAUNCHING into the world of Urdu, like so much else in life, was in large measure a matter of chance. Until 1942 I don't think I had ever even heard of Urdu, but in January of that year I found myself on a troopship bound for India, one of a large draft of British infantry officers whose services, now that the Germans had committed most of their forces to war with the Soviet Union, had become surplus to military requirements in Britain and who were now being sent on attachment to the Indian Army, greatly expanded to meet the threat of the Japanese, who had advanced with unexpectedly lightning rapidity to India's eastern borders.

Urdu, written in a Roman script, i.e., using the English alphabet, with some of the letters adapted, was then the language of command in the Indian Army, and all who joined it were required to learn it, including those Indian soldiers who came from regions where Urdu was not spoken. I can't remember now whether *all* of us on the draft were involved in learning or how much time was devoted to it, but I do remember that our teaching didn't amount to much and that our teacher was a British colonel whose own Urdu, I now strongly suspect, was both limited and inaccurate. We were required to take it more seriously after, in March 1942, we reached Kakul, in the Hazara District of the North-West Frontier Province, where we began our training in the duties of officers in what was then the Royal Indian Army Service Corps. Most of us hadn't much wanted to go to India, and most evinced little or no enthusiasm for learning the language. I and one or two others were exceptions, in that we were free of the ignorant imperialist prejudices of most of our colleagues and were interested in communicating on equal terms with people with

whom Urdu would be our only common language. Within that small group I was a further exception, in that I had already for eight years been a communist, committed to the cause of Indian independence, and was now equally committed to learning Urdu so that I could make it clear to the Indian soldiers who were to come under my command that I thought they should support, if necessary by armed force, those who were struggling to end British rule.

The story of how far I succeeded in this ambitious aim belongs elsewhere, but with this strong motivation for learning I made good progress. The Indian Army in those days employed Urdu-speakers called *munshis*, and I remember with amusement the old chap who was doing his best to get Urdu into the thick heads of his reluctant class saying, on one occasion, “All you gentlemen are good [though they most certainly weren’t], but *this* gentleman [indicating me] is *appreciable*.” It was the first time I had had the opportunity to learn a foreign language in the way in which, wherever possible, it should be learnt, by using it as I acquired it to converse, over however limited a range, with people who knew no English. One of these was Qabul Shah, a youngster who used to deliver newspapers to our camp, and I eventually persuaded him to sign on as my “bearer”—the civilian equivalent of an officer’s batman—and come with me on my numerous short-term postings until in, I think, September or October 1942 I was posted to an active service area where civilian servants were not permitted to go. The unit I was posted to was one of soldiers from South India, whose Urdu, with one or two exceptions, was not much better than—and often not as good as—mine, but two of my fellow lieutenants, a Sikh named Gopal Singh and a Pathan named Muhammad Nawaz Khan, were Urdu speakers, and both of these helped me a lot. So too did three of the V.C.O.s, holders of a rank peculiar to the Indian army. In a sane, non-imperialist set-up these men would have been promoted from the ranks to become King’s Commissioned Officers, like us, but that rank was reserved for Britishers and small numbers of English-educated Indians. One of the V.C.O.s, and their cook, had Urdu as their mother tongue.

By this time I had already passed the Indian Army Lower Examination in Urdu—conducted entirely in Indian Army Roman—and now began to prepare in a fairly leisurely way for the Higher, for which a knowledge of the Urdu script was required. I began to take the Urdu-script edition of the “army newspaper” (*Fauji Akhbār*) as well as the Roman edition, and advanced in due course to the prescribed text for the Higher exam. This was at that time *Khvāb-o-Khayāl*, the Urdu version of the au-

tobiography of Sitaram called *From Sepoy to Subedar* (subedar being the rank a V.C.O. reached after his first promotion). (This, which was, it seems an English translation, first published in 1873, of an Urdu original which could no longer be traced, was re-published in Britain some fifteen or twenty years ago—I think—under a new title which I cannot now remember.) *Khvāb-o-Khayāl* was a re-translation from the English, made by, or under the supervision of, Colonel D.C. Phillott. (Phillott had a very good command of both Urdu and Persian. His *Hindustani Manual* [first published in 1910] and his quaintly entitled *Hindustani Stumbling Blocks* [first published in 1909] are very sound treatments of Urdu grammar and syntax, and his *Higher Persian Grammar* [1919] is also a valuable work.) I digress at this point to say that before *Khvāb-o-Khayāl* superseded it the set book had been Mir Amman's *Bāgh-o-Bahār*. I still have the army edition of it, set in a near-*nasta'liq* Urdu type interesting to those interested in the history of Urdu printing, and accompanied by two useful volumes which list, in the order in which they occur in the text, and with English equivalents, Urdu words which the student would be unlikely to know. This speeds up reading no end, and in later years I, and with greater industry my colleagues David Matthews and Christopher Shackle, did the same for texts prescribed in the London B.A. syllabus.

But I never got round either to finishing *Khvāb-o-Khayāl* or to entering for the Higher Exam because the recently-legalized Communist Party of India had begun publishing Urdu translations of the Marxist-Leninist classics, and I turned my attention to these. I read Marx's articles on British rule in India and the first chapters of Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism*, greatly helped by the fact that I already knew practically by heart the English versions of these. I broke the bindings, interleaved the text with blank pages on which I could write notes and re-bound it. I still have the copy of *Foundations of Leninism* which I submitted to this treatment while I was in a military hospital in Trimulgherry, near Secunderabad, Deccan, in 1945, making covers from the blue paper in which rolls of cotton wool came packed. I think my knowledge of the English version helped me more than the only Urdu-English dictionary then available to me, that of Ram Narain Lal, published from Allahabad.

And this was the sum total of the Urdu proficiency which I brought with me when, after three and a half years in India and a further year awaiting demobilization in Britain, I entered the School of Oriental and African Studies in October 1946—fluency in everyday conversation of a very elementary kind, and a (highly specialized!) literary vocabulary acquired from the reading I have described. Just *how* specialized this was I

discovered later when I was appointed by the Party to run a Marxist education class for Indian communist students. Extracts from *Foundations of Leninism* was part of the required reading. One of the class was a post-graduate who had had her university education in the Urdu-medium Osmania University of Hyderabad, and whose command of English was not as good as that of the others in the class. When she learnt that I had a copy of the Urdu translation she was delighted, and asked if I would lend it to her. A week later she returned it to me, saying that she could read the English version more easily!

My arrival in SOAS also owed a good deal to chance. I was still awaiting demobilization when my elder brother's wife sent me a cutting from the *New Statesman* which her sister had sent to her. I didn't read the *New Statesman* and would never have seen it myself. The cutting said that SOAS was offering studentships (worth more than the current grant to university students) to honors graduates of a British university who would be willing to do a second B.A. Hons. degree in certain subjects. One of these subjects was Urdu, and I decided to apply. I did so with some misgivings. In the first place I didn't know if I *was* an honors graduate. I had been at St. John's College, Cambridge from 1937 to 1940. The Cambridge degree had two parts: you took Part I at the end of your second year and Part II at the end of your third. In Part I I had read classics (Latin and Greek) and got a 2.1 (upper second) in it, the fruit less of my leisurely studies at Cambridge than of my school education, in which the study of classics had formed an absurdly predominant part. So far, so good; but for Part II I had decided to change my subject to historical, political and economic geography. I had several reasons for making this change, but the decisive one was the calculation that no one in the field of geography knew me and I could hope to spend almost all my time on Communist Party activity without my academic supervisors even noticing that I wasn't doing any work for them. The result was, as might have been expected, that in Part II I didn't achieve even a 3rd. My finals coincided with the fall of France (June 1940), and the moment final exams were over we were all called up for military service, without waiting for the formal degree-awarding ceremonies. I soon received the university piece of paper certifying that I was now a B.A., but I didn't know whether this B.A. was a B.A. Hons. or not.

Secondly, I was a known communist. The Cold War had already started, and though anti-communist hysteria never reached the stage it

did in the USA, discrimination against communists was nevertheless pretty general. I knew that I was known to British intelligence, and assumed that this information would be available to the SOAS authorities. Anyway, I decided to take a chance, and felt it would slightly increase my chances if I made no reference to my political activities. For similar reasons I thought it best not to give my old college tutor as a reference, since he might reveal all to the SOAS authorities. After my application had gone in I went on an army course where I became enamored of a young ATS sergeant. (I can't remember what ATS stood for, but it was the women's branch of the army.) Like everybody else around me at that time, she knew I was a Communist Party member. One day in conversation she asked me what I was going to do when I got out of the army. I told her I had applied for a studentship at SOAS. "Oh," she said, "the Director of SOAS is my uncle." In a later conversation she told me she had told her uncle I was a communist, and I gathered that he had responded with tolerant amusement. Later, when I went for interview I was disconcerted at one point to be told, "Oh, Russell, we noticed that you didn't give your college tutor as a reference, but we wrote to him anyway." I gathered that he couldn't have said anything to jeopardize my chances. Other things happened at the interview which must have gone in my favor. I discovered that both the Director, Ralph Turner, and my future head of department, John Brough, had, like me, been at Cambridge. Like me, both had read classics; like me, Brough had been at St. John's College; and Turner had been at Christ's, a college that had historical links with St. John's. I'm sure these things, which have no importance for me, will have been important to them. Better still I had decided to take Sanskrit as my subsidiary subject, and both Turner and Brough were Sanskritists. When I was asked what subsidiary subject I would choose and said "Sanskrit," one of the interviewing board, a member of the Near and Middle East Department, was unwise enough to remark that he couldn't see that this would be of much use to a student of Urdu. Brough and Turner politely squashed him, and my choice of Sanskrit must have added points in my favor. Anyway, I got the studentship, and that too at the top end of the scale of the grant being offered. Years later John Harrison, my SOAS colleague in the History Department, told me that he too had been a candidate for the studentship in Urdu, but when he presented himself for interview he was told that it had already been given to me. Some administrative lash-up had led to his application for Urdu being overlooked. They suggested he take one for Indian history instead, which he did. If this hadn't happened his application would have been, in one respect at

any rate, stronger than mine, because he had taken and passed the Indian Army Higher Exam in Urdu.

Anyway, just as the fortunes of war had launched me into the field of Urdu, the fortunes of peace had now played their part in getting me into SOAS.

When I think back now to the expectations I entertained when I entered SOAS, it makes me laugh. I thought I knew much more Urdu than in fact I did, and I had chosen Sanskrit as my subsidiary subject on the calculation that proficiency in Urdu and proficiency in Sanskrit would enable me to learn very easily a number of other Indian languages. Well, it might have done, but for the inconvenient fact that the demands made of me both by the Urdu syllabus and the Sanskrit one were extremely heavy, and made excursions into other languages quite impossible. Throughout my three-year course I worked extremely hard, in marked contrast to my Cambridge days. Then I had gone to university partly because everybody had assumed that I ought to, and partly because it postponed the necessity of finding some means of earning a living. This necessity had been further postponed by six years of compulsory service in the war-time army. But now I was 28 years old and needed to think seriously about what I was going to do with my life. My stay in India had generated a strong desire to find a job which would enable me to maintain close contact with it and I thought that an academic career in Urdu or some other India-related (after 1947, India/Pakistan-related) field might be one possibility. So a determination to excel in my second university B.A. Hons. course naturally followed from this, and if I was to excel I needed to work extremely hard.

I had not expected to find the Urdu side so difficult. I began my reading of Urdu literary prose with Nazir Ahmad's *Taubatu 'n-Naṣūḥ* and was considerably shaken to find that a knowledge of the vocabulary of the Urdu version of *Foundations of Leninism* was, shall we say, of very little help when it came to reading the brilliant description of the cholera epidemic in Delhi with which *Taubatu 'n-Naṣūḥ* begins. And the Sanskritists, as is the way with university teachers required to teach their subject as a subsidiary subject to another, gave little consideration to the fact that it *was* as a subsidiary subject that I was studying it, and demanded pretty nearly as much from me as they did from students taking it as a main subject. I later decided to solve this problem myself. I decided what would be the appropriate time to allot to Sanskrit, and therefore which

lectures I should and which I shouldn't attend, went to my teachers, and got their agreement to this reduced scale. As with the main subject, we took the subsidiary at the end of our third and final year, and Brough afterwards told me, "You did remarkably well considering it was only your subsidiary subject."

At this point I may as well say something about my Sanskrit studies. I enjoyed Sanskrit enormously, but was very critical of the syllabus. Sanskrit studies in the West have been dominated by scholars whose interest in the language has always been motivated by an interest in either comparative philology or Hindu religion and philosophy, and the syllabus reflected this. I'm not particularly interested in either of these fields. The Vedas, and large parts of the *Bhagavadgītā* leave me cold, while what I may call the secular literature makes a tremendous appeal to me. I would have cut down on the *Bhagavadgītā* (we read the whole of it) because most of it is in my view as banal and often repellent as other parts of it are profound and inspiring, and devoted much more time to the sort of literature exemplified by the brief poems which Brough later translated so brilliantly in *Poems from the Sanskrit*. All the same, there were good things in the syllabus. In prose, I loved the animal fables of the *Hitopade...a*, but we were never enabled to extend our reading of simple prose like that before coming on to more complex stuff like the prose of the *Da...akumāracārīta*—the picaresque tale of the ten princes. I once made this point to the most brilliant of my Sanskrit teachers, an elderly Gujarati named Dr. T.N. Dave, and he at once took down from his shelf a volume of the philosopher Sankaracarya and read with me a beautiful, lucid extract from his prose. Had we had a better syllabus I would have enjoyed Sanskrit more, but even so I did enjoy it very much, and although I have never been able to use it for the purpose for which I chose it, I regret that I have not maintained such proficiency as I attained, because I would very much like to be able to re-read without difficulty some of the things I read during those years.

The Urdu syllabus was a heavily literary one. No consideration was given to enabling students to become fluent *speakers* of Urdu. I had to make up for this deficiency myself. I was determined to maintain my fluency and extend greatly the range of my vocabulary, and to this end I arranged regular sessions with Urdu-speaking friends in which we spoke only Urdu. The desire to be able to converse easily with Urdu speakers had been my main motivation for learning Urdu, and the motivation of many other students was likely to be the same. And I have never varied in my opinion that you need a good command of spoken Urdu even if your

main concern is with Urdu literature, and that you can't claim to understand the literature fully unless you can speak the language well. (For instance, there are lines in Mir which you can't understand unless you can, so to speak, *hear* them.)

Apart from noting this major deficiency in it, I was in 1946 in no position to survey the syllabus critically, and the only thing that struck me about it was that there was nothing in it by the only poet whose name I knew before coming to SOAS, namely Iqbal, the most influential poet of the twentieth century. When I told my Urdu-speaking friends this they were amazed, as well they might be. Iqbal's exclusion could not be justified even by the common (though quite unjustified) convention that you didn't include in a syllabus anything by a writer who was still living. The requirement to read quite widely in Urdu literature was a welcome one. I had loved the literature of English, of the Latin and (still more) the Greek writers I had read, and of European classics available in translation, and I looked forward to making the acquaintance of Urdu literature too. I haven't the 1946 syllabus before me as I write, but I remember that prose works included Mir Amman's tale of the four dervishes, *Bāgh-o-Bahār*, Nazir Ahmad's *Taubatu 'n-Naṣūb* (The Repentance of Nasuh), the story of a man's attempts to make his family true Muslims after his own conversion following his miraculous recovery from an attack of cholera, the chapters on Mir and Sauda in Muhammad Husain Azad's *Āb-e Ḥayāt*, a wonderfully vivid account of the great Urdu poets, and Hali's *Muqaddima-e She'r-o-Shā'irī*, in which he attempts to define poetry, and in the light of his definition then proceeds to survey the whole range of Urdu poetry, genre by genre, condemning what he regards as its undesirable features and making proposals for reform.

Verse, if I remember aright, comprised substantial selections from a volume called *Naẓm-e Muntakhab* and I immediately liked such as I could understand of the ghazals of Ghalib (1797–1869), thus already on his way to becoming my favorite poet, as he is the favorite poet of millions of others. The selection included Hali's *Musaddas*, a long poem in which he recounts the past glories of Islam and tries thus to inspire Muslims to change their present deplorable condition; and Anis's famous *marṣiya* (elegy on the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson Husain) *jab qaṭ'a kī musāfat-e shab āftāb nē* (of which an English verse translation by David Matthews has recently been published). Both of these were given complete and unabridged. I still have my copy of this selection. The title page reads:

Nazm-i-Muntakhab, being selections from the poets for the Degree of Honour examination in Urdu, compiled and arranged by Shams-ul-ulama Maulavi Muhammad Yusuf Jafari, chief maulavi, board of examiners, and Maulavi Saiyid Ali Sajjad, some time acting chief maulavi, Board of Examiners, under the superintendence of Captain C.L. Peart, offg. secretary, Board of Examiners, published by authority, Calcutta. Printed at the Baptist Mission Press, 1909.

One of my teachers, Capt. A.R. Judd, once said to me in a rather conspiratorial tone that it was a good selection, but that no Indian would admit this because it had been compiled for Indian Army officers. In those days, of course, I did not know enough to form a judgement, but I have just looked at it again, and it seems to me to be a rather extraordinary selection. I do not know what sort of skills the Degree of Honor was supposed to test, but it seems that its designers, like Judd, were more interested in range of vocabulary than anything else. The selection includes no poet before Atish, and it replaced an even more extraordinary choice of prescribed texts—*Kulliyāt-e Saudā* and *Kulliyāt-e Ātish*. I can't remember how much of it I was required to read, but I do remember reading some quite insipid, moralizing verses from its selection of Akbar Ilahabadi. This comprises 63 *rubā'īs* and 5 *qaṭ'as* (of which two are mistakenly said to be *rubā'īs*). It was only in later years that I realized that the compilers had rigorously excluded all verses in which Akbar (1846–1921) had mocked enthusiasts for the British and their way—that is, precisely that part of his verse for which he is justly famous!

But obviously it was right to include Hali's *Musaddas* and the *marṣiya* of Anis, and these together occupy 46 of its 162 pages.

Besides Capt. A.R. Judd I had two other teachers, A.H. Harley, who had charge of both the Urdu and the Hindi teaching, and Hamid Hasan Bilgrami. Bilgrami, as you can infer from his name, was a native speaker of Urdu, and came to SOAS as what was then called an “overseas lecturer.” I don't know how he was chosen. He had been a teacher in the Doon School, Dehra Dun, and his only publication was a small book *Khulāṣa-nigāri* which exercised school students in précis-writing. As far as I know, he had never taught at university level. I don't know either how extensive his reading in Urdu literature was. I remember his attributing to Sauda a poem which I later learnt was in fact one of Jur'at's, his referring to Faiz as “Faiz Muhammad Faiz” when even I knew that it should have been Faiz Ahmad Faiz, and his remarking of Iqbal, “Some mature minds think it is too early to write about Iqbal. I myself have not written about him.”

But as a teacher and a man he was both conscientious and kind, and I owe him a lot. It was he who first introduced me to the mysteries of Urdu verse meters, and when I went on my first study leave in 1949 he armed me with letters of introduction to such luminaries as (among others) Zakir Husain, Ihtisham Husain and Abdul Haq.

Harley had once been head of the Calcutta *madrassa*. (I have never bothered to find out what this was, but I believe that Harley had been quite high up in the Indian Education Service; so it must have been quite a prestigious institution. And the fact that it was called a *madrassa* presumably means that it specialized in Islamic and Islam-related subjects.) He was one of the nicest kind of old-style liberal imperialists and, along with that, the stereotypical “absent-minded professor.” A student would appear at his door at the appointed time and be greeted with a surprised, “You’re not with me now!”—after which he would look at the time-table on his desk and find that the student was indeed “with him now.” He had the old-style conviction of the absolute need to maintain a show of knowing more than Judd or Bilgrami, who were subordinate to him, and this sometimes led to amusing incidents. He once appeared when I was having a class with Judd and, speaking in Urdu, asked me if I intended to use the coming vacation to get further in Urdu. I said I thought I could make substantial progress, *agar main musalsal kām karūn*—if I work continuously—whereupon he held up his finger and said, “Not *musalsal silsilēvār*.” After he’d gone Judd said, “You were quite right, but don’t tell him I said so.” Once in conversing with him I used the words “*nazar-andāz karnā*.” He didn’t understand, and I said it meant “to disregard” (which of course it does). He said it couldn’t mean that, and must mean “to concentrate on something.” But he was unfailingly kind and helpful to me and would always give me time and attention well beyond the call of duty, inviting me to come and read with him during the university vacations as well as in term-time.

He was also very appreciative of my prowess. One of my fellow students once told me that Harley had told him that I spoke Urdu so well that he, Harley, had to take care not to make any mistakes when *he* spoke. I shall have more to say about him later.

Judd was by far and away the most remarkable of my teachers, and my debt to him is immense. Since he was himself English and had learnt Urdu as a foreign language he understood very well the difficulties that confront an English learner and knew how to explain them. And his command of Urdu was astounding. He not only spoke Urdu with complete facility, with complete accuracy and with a fluency which I have

never encountered in any other speaker of English-as-mother-tongue. He also wrote it in an elegant flowing hand of which I still have some samples (see Figure 1). (This is a skill I have never acquired.) Most of what I knew of him in my student days I learnt from what he himself told me. During or shortly after the First World War he had been a private in the Royal Norfolk Regiment. (He still spoke English with quite a broad Norfolk accent.) His regiment had been posted to India, and, I gathered, had stayed there continuously up to the Second World War. For some reason he had soon acquired an intense interest in Urdu and had set himself to master it. As many since his day have learnt, this endears one to Urdu speakers, and he received their willing help. They introduced him to such famous figures as Khwaja Hasan Nizami, the poet Bekhud, and the scholar Abdul Haq. (He told me that when Hasan Nizami had asked him his name and he had said it was Judd, Hasan Nizami smiled and said, “*bā dāl-e fārsī yā bā dāl-e hindī*”?—“with Persian ‘d’ or Hindi ‘d’?—i.e., with a dental, or a retroflex? *Jad* in Persian means grandfather.) When the Japanese entered the Second World War in December 1941 the army establishment, for once, recognized Judd’s remarkable talent, and employed him on the task of translating army manuals into Urdu. He needed a team of Urdu speakers with a good knowledge of English to work under him, and the army evidently felt that they needed to enhance his authority by promoting him to the rank of captain.

Judd’s major interest was in the language, and within that, in what he called “idiom and proverb,” and the only fault in his Urdu was the inappropriate profusion with which he introduced proverbs into his conversation, producing an effect rather like that an English speaker would produce if his every sentence included something like “Too many cooks spoil the broth” or “A stitch in time saves nine.” He knew plenty of obscenities too, and often when he was teaching us would quote one, laugh, put his hand in front of his mouth and say, “Ooh! I mustn’t tell you what *that* means.” One of my fellow-students (David Horsburgh) would regularly respond, “Oh, go on sir! Tell us,” whereupon he would. I remember that it was from him that I learnt what *čaptī* meant. (Platts defies it in Latin words which mean “lustful congress of two women.”) It came in some jingle of which the second line was “*ā’ō parōsan čaptī kbēlēn*”—Come, neighbor, let’s play *čaptī*. I guess he had left school at 14, which in his boyhood was the school-leaving age, and probably went into the army as soon as he was old enough. A curious result of this was that the range of his Urdu vocabulary was a good deal more extensive than that of his English, and he would have to explain the meaning of an Urdu word for

بہت بھری ہے اور اگر بقیہ قسمت انسان موت کو ایسی وضع بنا کہ اور اس وضع پر قائم رہنے کا حکم کرے
 تو کبھی کبھی یہ دنیا والے کو یہ تو بہت جلد مار ڈالیں یا وہ اپنے عزم میں ناخام بھراؤں وضع کو
 چھوڑ بیٹھتا ہے۔ اب یہی دیکھو کہ حج جس وقت یہ طے کیا کہ ہم کسی رسالہ میں بلا مواد خود کو مضمون ز
 دنیائے اس وقت پہلے کو اپنے با موت ہونے کا خیال کر لیا۔ لیکن جب اپنے ارادے کو عملی صورت میں لانے کی
 کوشش کی تو ایسے ٹھیکر سے پیدا ہوئے کہ ہم کس طرح ان مہمیزوں رسالجات کو اجرت کے لئے لکھیں گے اس پر تہ
 تعلقات میں اور جو چاہتے ہو دوست ہو چکے ہیں۔ لہذا رکھنے سے ہم جھجکا اور ہر بلا اجرت مضامین
 بھی شروع کر دیے۔ تو وہ دنوں کے بعد ہم نے طے کر لیا کہ اب موت تو بالائے طاق رکھ کر اجرت لینا شروع کریں۔
 دوزیر رسالہ مفت مضامین لکھواتے لکھواتے ہم کو مار ڈالیں گے۔ اور ہمارے ہمارے موت دھرم کا جاملی
 ہذا بہت غور و فکر بعد ارادہ کر کے اور اردوں کو ملنے اور پورا ارادہ کر کے اور اردوں میں نا کام کو اور اگر ہم نے
 بہت آید نہ ہم نے بہت کی اور ایسے رسالے کی مضمون فرمائیں کہ جواب میں اجرت کے لئے لکھی ہی دیا
 لیکن جب خط لکھنے کے لیے میں ڈال چکے تو انہوں نے ہوا کہ ہم نے خواہ خواہ دس پندرہ روپے کے لئے ان تعلقات
 مجروح کر دیا جو اب تک قائم تھے۔ ہر حال اب جو جو رقم ہونا تھا ہو ہی چکا۔ اب جو ان خط کے جواب میں ایسے
 صاحب نے اس مالی مشکلات کا دونا دونا اور زبان کی غصہ کے لئے اپنے اشارے کا تقاضا ہے تو ہم کو اس کا
 مجبور لگا کر پھر دن اور اسے بیکار کو برداشت کیجئے کہ بعد انشاء اللہ آج کو جو مال لکھنے لکھنا
 تو جناب ہم کو ہر شرم آئی اور ہم عرق پونگے اور سہ نوراً کو لکھنا کہ نہیں صاحب غلطی سے پہلے خط میں
 آ کر لکھنا تھا میں تو ان کا خادم ہوں آپ اطمینان رکھئے میں زندگی بھر مفت مضامین بھیجا رہوں گا۔
 تقریباً یہاں حال ہر سال کے ساتھ ہوا اور ہر سال کی طرف سے جواب میں مضمون واحد ہذا ہمارے جان ہم

Figure 1. A page of Capt. A.R. Judd, Urdu handwriting.

which (unknown to him) an exact equivalent exists in English by explaining the circumstances in which it would be used. He often used mime as well. I remember him explaining the meaning of *baglā bhagat* (roughly, “a saintly crane”—i.e., a person who seems to be a saint but is in fact a very dangerous and treacherous person). He said the crane stands on one leg, apparently paying no attention to anything, and will suddenly, quick as a flash, take a fish with its beak—a process which he would illustrate by himself standing on one leg and suddenly letting his head plunge downwards.

In those days I and my fellow students studied Urdu with none of the aids available to students of, say, French. There were two histories of Urdu literature in English—T. Grahame Bailey’s and Ram Babu Saxena’s—which I read with mounting indignation and contempt. (See my “How Not to Write the History of Urdu Literature,” in *AUS* #6.) There was the much better *A Critical Survey of the Development of the Urdu Novel and Short Story* (1945), by Shaista Akhtar Banu Suhrawardy (Begum Ikramullah). There were no studies in English of individual authors. And that was all. Only one of our set books was available in an edition with English notes—Kempson’s edition of an abridged text of *Taubatu ’n-Nasūh*, and his later, and better, edition of its first five chapters. For the rest we had the Urdu text and Platts’s dictionary. I eventually read most of Hali’s *Muqaddima She’r-o-Shā’iri* with no other equipment, but the standard practice was for the student to sit with his teacher and for them to *read* the text together, with the teacher explaining whatever the student couldn’t understand. Harley did this with the aid of notes—the wide margins of *Nazm-e Muntakhab* were filled with them—which recorded the explanations he had been given years ago by someone whom he always called “my old munshi.” Neither Judd nor, of course, Bilgrami needed any such aid. (In later years, as I have already said, I, and still more my colleagues Christopher Shackle and David Matthews, eased the student’s lot by supplying word lists for many of the texts—see p. 7 above). But to return to Judd, since we studied in the way I have described, I would arrive with the book we were to read and we would begin. He could, without any previous preparation, read and explain anything in Urdu you put before him, so all I had to do was sit down beside him, open the book, and say, “Begin here.” I never encountered any Urdu word of which he didn’t know the meaning. (Harley was no match for him in this respect.) But Judd’s ignorance of Urdu *literature* was astounding. One of our set books was a selection from Sarshar’s *Fasāna-e Āzād*, one of the most celebrated proto-novels of the nineteenth century. Sarshar delights

in exuberant language and colloquial dialogue, and this pleased Judd no end. From time to time he would exclaim, “*This* is a good book! Who wrote this?” On the first occasion he picked up the book and looked at the spine, but the author’s name was not given there. But in any case Sarshar’s name meant nothing to him. He was interested in the language, not the literature, and although he must have read a lot to acquire the vast vocabulary he had, he must have done so with that sole purpose in mind. So he neither knew nor cared who Sarshar was, and if *I* was interested, he left it to me to find out from the other teachers.

Judd, as one would have expected, had always been, and continued to be, the undeserving victim of British snobbishness, but his justifiable confidence in his superiority in Urdu to, e.g., British officers in the Indian Army enabled him to laugh at this. He once told me how he and an Indian Army officer named G.D. Pybus (author of a useful book on *Urdu Prosody and Rhetoric*) were once entered for the same army exam. They had to be ferried across a river to the place where the exam was to be held. Judd sat down at one end of the boat and Pybus at the other end, facing him. Pybus had heard of Judd’s remarkable achievements, noticed that the man facing him was wearing the ordinary Tommy’s uniform, and suddenly realizing who he must be, burst out, “Are you that bloody fellow Judd?” Judd told me this laughingly, and without any bitterness. The attitude of his social “superiors” at SOAS, including Harley, was more polite but no more cordial, and I regret to say that Bilgrami’s attitude too matched theirs. I once spoke to Bilgrami of Judd’s extraordinary command of Urdu and his only response was to look as though someone had held something that had a nasty smell under his nose and to say, “We don’t use proverbs all the time”—a valid criticism of Judd’s Urdu, but no warrant for treating Judd with contempt. I later learnt to my great satisfaction that Bilgrami’s attitude was not shared by others of his class, the English-speaking Urdu-speakers who had worked under Judd during the war. One of these was Shanul Haq Haqqi, who has written amusingly and appreciatively of him in his autobiography.¹

I took my degree in 1949, and got a first, whereupon I was at once offered a lectureship in Urdu, which I accepted. This seems the appropriate point to explain something of the background to this. Towards the

¹Portions on Capt. Judd from Haqqi’s personal reminiscences appear in the Urdu section of this issue. Judd also appears briefly in the fictional space of a short story, “*Khairō Kabārī*,” also by Haqqi. [—*Eds.*]

end of the second world war the British government of the day began to react to the new international conditions in which it would be operating once the war was over. The Soviet Union and its client states would be far more important than they had been in 1939, and countries still under British colonial rule would be moving towards independence. The British establishment assumed that they would then have a much greater need than before of people well-versed in the languages and cultures of these countries, and the government therefore set up a commission under the Earl of Scarbrough to consider what should be done about this. Their brief covered Slavonic and East European languages as well as those of Asia and Africa, but the position at SOAS naturally received much of their attention, and they concluded that the numbers of its staff should be substantially increased. The situation in Urdu was perhaps not untypical. People qualified to teach it were now of quite an advanced age. (T. Grahame Bailey, the best known British scholar of Urdu [and Panjabi] of his day, had died either in the summer of 1946 or the summer of the previous year, and Harley was already, I guess, past normal retiring age—he died in, I think, January 1951.) There was a need to train up people of rather longer life-expectancy, and the studentships of which I was awarded one were designed to achieve this purpose. I can't remember how soon I was made aware of this fact, but it was made clear to me long before I took my finals that if I got a first, and if SOAS thought me suitable, I would be offered a teaching post. So that was what happened.

One of the Scarbrough Commission's recommendations had been for the grant of periodical study leave for a year, for teachers to spend in the country of their specialty, and, rather to everyone's surprise, I pressed strongly for this to be granted to me at once, before I was required to start teaching. I had a limited range of friendly contacts with Urdu speakers studying in England, and a limited range of acquaintance with works of literature, but I felt (rightly!) that I needed to gain access to the community of cultured Urdu speakers for and by whom Urdu literature was created, and that too in their natural setting in India and Pakistan. I needed to meet many of these, to extend still further the range of my reading and the scope of my spoken Urdu, and to make the acquaintance of scholars and writers in the main centers of Urdu in India and Pakistan. Harley didn't share my feelings about all this, but consented to go along with it, and SOAS did grant me a year's leave for the 1949–50 session. I left for India accompanied by my wife (despite the advice of the then Secretary of SOAS who told me, "India is no place for a white woman these days") and in November 1949, after a short stay in Delhi, I reached

Aligarh Muslim University.

In Delhi I had my first experience of the ease with which an Englishman of no particular importance can gain access to people famous in the Urdu literary world. By this time I knew of Krishan Chandar. The verandas of Connaught Circus were in those days full of pavement shops set up by refugees from what was now Pakistan, and I had become friendly with one who displayed communist literature for sale. One day in conversation I mentioned Krishan Chandar, and he said, "He is in Delhi at present. Would you like me to take you to see him?" I was as pleased as I was surprised that there was evidently no difficulty in this, and at once accepted. Krishan Chandar met me on friendly, equal terms, and talked to me about the PWA (Progressive Writers' Association), of which he was a leading member.

Before leaving Delhi I had written to Zakir Husain, Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University, enclosing a letter of introduction from Bilgrami. On arrival I was amazed to find that he'd sent a car to meet me. (Can you imagine the Vice-Chancellor of a British university treating a newly-arrived, newly-appointed lecturer from an Indian university like this?) In fact I nearly missed the driver Zakir Sahib had sent. He'd been expecting an English couple to alight from a 1st class carriage, hadn't seen one, and was walking rather anxiously up and down the platform in search of one. He hadn't found us where he expected because we'd travelled 3rd class from Delhi. In those days there were 3rd class carriages with long wooden benches running the whole length of the carriage—one along each outer wall and two back to back in the middle. We had been travelling in one of these. I'd been practising my Urdu on the passengers, sharing peanuts with them, and having a very jolly and uproarious time. We arrived at Zakir Sahib's house, he learnt that as yet we had nowhere to stay, and he at once made us his guests. I think we stayed with him about a fortnight before fixing ourselves up with accommodation elsewhere. During that time the more I got to know him the better I liked him. I had known of him as one of those few prominent Muslims who had been a supporter of the Indian National Congress, and I now learnt (not primarily from him) more of his history. He was a man of wide culture who had made his name not as a scholar or a writer but as a major figure both in education and, less prominently, in politics. He had come to the fore in the 1920s when he was associated with the Jamia Millia Islamia (University of the Muslim Community), founded originally in

reaction against the pro-British policies of Aligarh. (To anticipate a little, after his term at Aligarh he became successively Governor of Bihar, Vice-President of India, and for a short time before his death, President. He was unfailingly kind to me and appreciative of what Khurshidul Islam and I wrote, and I kept in touch with him throughout. I was again his guest at the Governor's house in Ranchi in 1958, and went to see him in Delhi when he was Vice-President. The last time I met him was in 1969 when he presided over the opening session of the Indian Government's Ghalib centenary celebrations. He died soon after this.)

Also staying with Zakir Sahib when I reached Aligarh was Nurur Rahman, an old friend of his who quickly warmed to me—largely because on one occasion he and Zakir Sahib were discussing the word *nipaṭ*, which, it seemed, Zakir Sahib was not familiar with. By sheer chance I did know it because Judd had told me that *nipaṭ bahrā* was the idiomatic Urdu equivalent of “stone deaf.” (I don't think I've ever encountered the word again from that day to this.) Nurur Rahman was delighted and no doubt formed a greatly exaggerated estimate of my command of Urdu.

As Zakir Husain's guest I arrived in the Urdu Department, headed at the time by Prof. Rashid Ahmad Siddiqi, in circumstances which practically guaranteed me V.I.P. treatment. I think I owed the cordiality of my welcome to two things: first the standard of hospitality for which South Asians are justly famous, and secondly a much less desirable (to say the least of it) wish to please members of the former ruling race. The proportion which each of these things occupies in people's minds varies from person to person, but there aren't many, in my estimate, who are wholly free of this second attitude. In Rashid Sahib's department I was soon to meet one who was—Khurshidul Islam. He had no such servile desire to please, and no reason to think that I wasn't a typical Britisher, and so made no move to go out of his way to cultivate any acquaintance with me. And so my first contact with him was in a seminar arranged by Rashid Sahib for me to meet members of his staff and to put to them any questions which I wanted to discuss with them about Urdu and its literature. The seminar closed with a very impressive compendious statement of Khurshid's replies to all my questions, and it was after that I sought him out for a further talk. The occasion for this arose when one of his fellow lecturers told me to take some questions I had to Khurshid, who would answer them more adequately than he could. I went to see him. It was about eleven o'clock on a winter's day and he was walking up and down the small lawn in front of the department office in the pleasant winter sunshine. I joined him. I remember vividly how much he im-

pressed me in this first conversation, though it was not on a major topic of Urdu literature (the question was about the “Adab-e Laṭīf” writers of the early twentieth century). There were several things I liked about him. Most of all, I suppose, it pleased me that he met me on warm, friendly, equal terms, without any trace of servility or of any desire to impress, and without any sort of formality. I liked his voice; I liked the ease and clarity with which he spoke Urdu; and I liked the thoughtfulness and coherence of the views he expressed. I determined there and then to see much more of him, and I did, with the result that in the course of my six months’ stay in Aligarh he became one of my firmest and most intimate friends. I soon learnt that, like me, he was a communist, though not at the time a member of the party. His greatest contribution was that he enabled me, for the first time in three years of study, to understand and appreciate the Urdu ghazal. (I have described my difficulties and their eventual solution in the chapter headed “Understanding the Urdu Ghazal” in my *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature*). Besides many other things we had in common was our approach to literature. He was the first Urdu speaker I had met for whom great literature was (as it is for me too) something that teaches you, moulds you, changes you, transforms you, bringing to you all the time a greater and truer awareness of yourself and of other people and of the universe in which you live. Similarly, he was the first Urdu speaker I had met who had read with this passionate, self-transforming interest, not only the literature of his own language, but that of the great world classics from the European Renaissance onwards. His interest in, knowledge of, and assessment of the great Urdu writers seemed to me to reflect all this, and consequently to be in a class of its own.

If Khurshidul Islam was the one in Aligarh who helped me most, he was certainly not the only one from whose kindness and willingly extended help I gained a great deal. Rashid Ahmad Siddiqi personally put himself out to help me. He told me early on that if I would write something in Urdu every day and bring it to him as soon as he came to the Department every morning he would sit with me, correct what I had written, and explain to me where I had gone wrong. He was a lazy man, and this arrangement soon petered out, but again, can you imagine a famous writer (as Rashid Sahib was) and head of a university department of English receiving a newly-appointed Indian lecturer in English, newly arrived in Britain, in this way? While I was there he lectured on Ghalib, for whom he had a particular fondness. People used to laugh and say that though he loved Urdu poetry he could hardly ever scan a line of Urdu verse correctly, and as far as I know he didn’t deny this.

He deputed one of the younger lecturers in the department, Akhtar Ansari, to be my main helper, and he gladly undertook this role. At first our regular routine was for him to correct and discuss with me translations I made of passages in English that had appealed to me. I remember that one was taken from Defoe's *Moll Flanders*. But we would also talk freely about anything that interested us both. He prided himself on an exceptionally good command of English and had a cordial contempt for others whose pretensions in this respect were, he thought, unwarranted. He spoke to me once of someone who had used the phrase "broken English" saying that this man had obviously imagined that a literal translation of *tūṭī p^būṭī angrēzī* was good English. He was disconcerted when I assured him that "broken English" was perfectly good English idiom. He was delighted to learn from me of the existence of cockney rhyming slang, and thereafter regularly referred to his hat as his "titfer,"—short for "tit for tat," the rhyming slang for hat. His distinction as an Urdu writer was as a poet whose preferred verse form was the short poem called the *qaṭ'a* (or, as some pronounce it, *qīṭ'a*), but he was the author of some good critical essays too, including one on what he called the Delhi school of prose writers. He was also very interested in the portrayal of children in Urdu literature. The book of his which appealed to me most was *Ēk Adabī Ḍā'irī* (A Literary Diary), in which he had noted his reaction to books he had read—not only those of Urdu writers, but also of, e.g., Tagore and Somerset Maugham—and had written on other themes—e.g., solecisms commonly found in Panjabi writers of Urdu. In the now forty-five years since I first met him I have often thought that I too could write a book, in Urdu, on similar lines, and if I live long enough I should still like to do so.

Rashid Sahib also told his M.A. students to help me, and one of them, Shabihul Hasan, who years later became head of the department of Urdu in Lucknow University, became another voluntary, and willing helper.

I had been given carte blanche to attend any of the M.A. classes I liked. On the first occasion I did, I noticed that there was a curtain drawn right across the breadth of the room, and learnt that this was to enable the women students to observe purdah. There was a separate entrance for them at the back of the lecture room. They would come in and sit down, and when the lecturer was ready he would call out politely to find out if they were there. Of course, he had no means of telling whether they were *all* there. On another occasion I attended a class in the course of which Shabihul Hasan, already an accomplished Shī'a theologian, expressed

polite but firm disagreement with Rashid Sahib's inappropriate use (as *he* thought) of the word *barzakb*. (This is the rough equivalent of "purgatory." I can't remember now what the dispute was about.)

But I wanted more help than I felt I could ask anyone to give me free, and was prepared to pay for it. So at my request, Masud Husain Khan (Zakir Sahib's nephew and a lecturer in the department then beginning to make his name by his researches into the Urdu language) found me an M.A. student, Khalilur Rahman Azmi, who accepted the paid job of sitting with me every afternoon and reading with me, SOAS style. It was with him that I read Prem Chand's *Ga'odān*. (In the course of it he would tell me from time to time how fortunate I was to have his help, since he came from eastern U.P. and understood [as people from western U.P. would not have understood] the occasional "pūrabi" [eastern U.P.] words and phrases that Prem Chand uses in this novel.) After that we went on to read articles by Mumtaz Husain, and I remember being favorably impressed by Mumtaz Husain's readiness to tackle such basic themes as *Adabu 'l-Āliya Kyā Hai?* (What Is Classical Literature?)—and unfavorably impressed by the extraordinarily odd and convoluted Urdu in which he wrote about them. (I also remember piecing out and reading out loud some Urdu graffiti on a wall we were passing and, to Khalil Sahib's great amusement, realizing when I got to the end of it that it said "*X gāndū hai*"—(X is a catamite). "Catamite" is, so far as I know, the only one-word English translation of *gāndū*, but I imagine that many readers will need to look this word up in a dictionary!)

Khalil Sahib had been attacked during the Hindu-Muslim riots that accompanied independence as he was travelling by train from Delhi to Aligarh. He had been stabbed, thrown out of the train, and left for dead. But he recovered. In later years he became a lecturer in the Urdu department at Aligarh and eventually published a book on the Progressive Writers' Movement.

One thing that disconcerted me in the early days in Aligarh was the discovery that although I was now quite fluent, there were Urdu speakers of whose speech I could understand practically nothing. Rashid Sahib spoke so slowly and clearly that his Urdu was a joy to listen to. Masud Husain Khan, on the other hand, was at first practically unintelligible to me. I noticed that he pronounced some words in a way I had not heard before—e.g., he always said *shakist*, whereas I had always heard *shikast*—but I soon realized that it was something quite indefinable in his style of speech that made it difficult for me until I got used to it. I have already said that in London I had tried to make up for the lack of scope

for oral practice in the syllabus by arranging regular sessions with two or three Urdu-speaking friends at which we spoke only Urdu. I now realized that future students would need exposure to many more different speakers than I had conversed with if they were to be able to cope adequately, and in later years I took care to vary accordingly the recordings I had made for my students.

From Aligarh I had paid occasional visits to Delhi. I think it was on one of these that I later produced for publication what at that stage I thought were profound thoughts on the future of Urdu (“Urdū kā Mustaqbil,” [The Future of Urdu]; published in *Na’i Raushni* vol.4. no. 1:2).

This prompted Khawja Hasan Nizami to write to me. This remarkable man remains to this day one of the writers whose Urdu prose I most admire. As the incumbent at the shrine of Nizamud Din, close to Delhi, and the spiritual guide of hundreds of thousands of men and women from all walks of life he learnt how to write for their guidance in a simple, natural Delhi idiom which it is a joy to read. A typical example was his response in his letter to me to my estimate of the dangers facing Urdu in post-independence India. He thought that I was too pessimistic and said that his tongue was not harmed by the action of the thirty-two teeth that enclosed it, and the dangers to Urdu were no greater. I never met him, but his son, whom I went to meet after his father’s death, said with a smile that he was “a writing machine.” He may well have come near to achieving the aim which he declared to me in his letter. I translate from his Urdu: “I am now 74 years old, but even now ... I write a book of 16 pages every day, and ... have announced that before I die I will write 100,000 books.”

I stayed in Aligarh for most of the time from November 1949 until May 1950 and from then to September, when I was due to return home, visited other centers of Urdu in India and Pakistan meeting scholars, writers and poets and spending time with them. One very enjoyable experience was a train journey from Lucknow to Hyderabad (Deccan) to attend a so-called “Prem Chand Conference”—a name which disguised the fact that it was really a conference of the at that time semi-legal Progressive Writers’ Association—semi-legal because it was at this time more than ever before closely linked with the Communist Party of India. The C.P. in those days was pursuing an ultra-revolutionary, semi-terrorist policy, and the government, without actually declaring it illegal, had imprisoned all of its active cadre it could lay its hands on and forced the others to work underground. I travelled to Hyderabad from Lucknow in

the same compartment as two poets (Firaq Gorakpuri and Majaz), one literary critic (Ihtisham Husain), and Abdul Alim, who was not primarily a writer but an excellent organizer and, in my view, the PWA's most effective propagandist. A good time was had by all, as they say. There was no formality of any kind. I remember going into the toilet to cut my nails, and Alim Sahib, seeing the scissors in my hand, asked if I was going to circumcise myself. After the conference we all made a trip to Ajanta and Ellora, and Ihtisham Sahib and I remembered long afterwards how we stopped at a roadside stall announcing in large Urdu letters that it served "ispēshal ṭī." (The specialty seemed to be the enormous quantity of sugar in it.)

Hyderabad was not the only center of Urdu I visited. I stayed in Lucknow, where I met, among others, the literary critic Ale Ahmad Sarur (with whom I stayed), Ihtisham Husain and Masud Hasan Rizvi (now an "elder statesman" in the Urdu world). I also made the acquaintance of Nasim Ahmad (the proprietor of Danish Mahal bookshop). One day Sarur Sahib and Ahsan Faruqi (a university colleague of his) took me to meet an illustrious member of the Rajah of Mahmudabad's family—I can't remember which one—at the imposing palace they maintained in Lucknow. I was much annoyed by the arrogance of this gentleman, who took it upon himself to rebuke Ahsan Faruqi for mispronouncing an Urdu word. Ahsan Faruqi respectfully quoted in his defense the saying "*ghalaṭu 'l-'ām faṣīḥ*" (i.e., the generally received pronunciation must be accepted as standard, even if differs from the original pronunciation). His aristocratic host replied that he considered *ghalaṭu 'l-'ām* to be not *faṣīḥ* but *fazīḥ* (filthy). I was equally annoyed, and much surprised, at the servile way in which his enlightened, progressive visitors behaved towards him. (This was the first time I had encountered this phenomenon. It was not to be the last by any means. In later years I found the same servility displayed towards their rich patron by communist writers, like the poet Ali Sardar Jafari and the writer-organizer Sajjad Zahir.)

Masud Hasan Rizvi was already a venerable Lakhnavi. He not only invited me to his house but took me to meet other litterateurs of his generation. I had already met his excellent edition of select *marṣiyas* of Anis, and was later to study his *Razmnāma-e Anīs*, an arrangement of passages from the *marṣiyas* which told as a connected narrative the whole story of the events leading up to the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson Husain at Karbala. Most of his other works also have a Lucknow background. By far the best and most interesting to me is his book *Hamāri Shā'iri* (Our Poetry) published originally in 1927 which I did not read till many years

later. Dismissed by T. Grahame Bailey as “sketchy essays in defense of Urdu poetry,” it is in fact a very effective rejoinder to Hali’s Victorian strictures on much of Urdu poetry, though in the characteristically diplomatic style of cultured Urdu speakers, its author refrains from saying this and claims simply to show an aspect of Urdu poetry which Hali did not treat of. Like most others I met, he behaved quite informally with me, and I must admit that this informality had an aspect which I didn’t much like. Thus at our very first meeting he retailed to me the gossip that Abul Kalam Azad (Minister of Education in the post-independence government) had once been (in words which he quoted to me) “Shibli kā nā-gufta-be”—“Shibli’s unspeakable”—i.e., the young object of Shibli’s homosexual attentions. (Shibli, who died in 1914, was, amongst other things, the author of numerous lives of prominent figures in Islamic history and of a voluminous history of Persian poetry, and the founder of Nadvatu ’l-’Ulamā’, a seminary in Lucknow which aimed at uniting traditional Islamic scholarship with research which, like his own, employed modern methods.)

In Delhi I met Ibadat Barelavi, who was then a lecturer in Delhi College, though he migrated soon afterwards to Pakistan, where in later years I always stayed with him whenever I visited Lahore. Many years later, in 1961–66, he was my colleague at SOAS, and I shall say more of him when I reach that point in my narrative. I also met Khwaja Ahmad Faruqi, head of the department of Urdu in Delhi University, and the “poet of revolution” Josh Malihabadi.

There were other cities in India I might have visited—for example Allahabad and Patna, where there are university departments of Urdu, but on this study leave I did not go there. I did make a special journey to Agra to meet Hamid Hasan Qadiri, a scholar of the older generation for whom I have a great regard. He can fairly be called old-fashioned. For example, his magnificent history of Urdu prose, *Dāstān-e Tārīkh-e Urdū* excludes fiction, presumably because he did not regard fiction as serious literature. But I have always valued his collections of essays on literature much more than the sophisticated, “with-it” criticism of his later contemporaries. For instance, the essay on the “rang” (“color”—i.e., special characteristic) of each of six classical poets with its down-to-earth discussion of detailed examples, is worth a lot more than the uninspired would-be Marxist analyses of Ihtisham Husain or the sophisticated, airily-fairy stuff of later names in literary criticism abounding in unnecessary references to whatever Western critics are fashionable at the time of writing.

In Pakistan I visited Lahore and Karachi. In Lahore I stayed with Faiz

[Ahmed Faiz], already the most famous poet of the post-1936 period, as he continued to be right up to his death in 1984. And in Radio Pakistan, just across the road from where Faiz then lived, I met Shaukat Thanavi, the most famous humorous writer in Urdu since the late twenties. (I shall not say more of Faiz here. I have devoted a whole chapter to him in my *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature*.) My constant companion and guide in Lahore was the poet, short story writer and editor of a literary magazine, Ahmad Nadim Qasmi, who was at that time the leading light in the Pakistan PWA, which soon afterwards ceased to function. He was unfailingly kind to me and gave me unlimited time.

On one occasion in Lahore Abdullah Malik, well-known as a communist journalist, took me to a meeting of the literary society, the Ḥalqa-e Arbāb-e Żauq, where I heard Manto, one of the most brilliant short story writers of the thirties and after, read a story called “License.” I didn’t learn until afterwards that the reader *was* Manto. But after the meeting Abdullah Malik told me this and asked if I would like to go and see him at his home in Lakshmi Mansions. When we got there I told him that I had heard him read his story and that I had liked it. “I don’t suppose you understood it,” he said; and when I said I *had* understood it, said, “Tell me what it was about, then.” I did, and he was very pleased. I much regret that I was never able to meet him again before he drank himself to death in 1955.

From Lahore I wrote, in Urdu, to Maulvi Abdul Haq in Karachi. He had long before independence been secretary of the Anjuman-e Taraqqī-e Urdū (Society for the Advancement of Urdu) and was generally known as Bābā-e Urdū, the Grand Old Man of Urdu. He responded at once and invited me to stay with him when I came to Karachi, which I did. I had many conversations with him and his friend Hashmi Faridabadi. He was pleased with my Urdu, and asked who my teacher had been. I told him, “Capt. Judd” (and he praised him highly) “and A.H. Harley” of whom he at once said with characteristic bluntness, “*voh kucḥ nabīn jāntā*”—He doesn’t know anything(!).

I returned to London in September 1950 well satisfied that I had achieved the aims for which I had come. I could not have achieved them were it not for the fact that I was everywhere made welcome. I have already spoken of two of the factors which helped to assure me of a welcome—Indo-Pakistan hospitality and a continuing unhealthy awe of Britishers. There was a third—the fact that I was a communist. The Indian and Pakistan public has never been infected by the anti-communist hysteria that has abounded in the USA or the much milder,

but still strong aversion which makes—or once made—a communist in Britain someone who was treated, shall we say, with considerable reserve. The Progressive Writers' Association had been since the middle 1930s representative of the major trend in Urdu writers, and the fact that its main organizers were communists or communist sympathizers had not put off major figures like Prem Chand and Abdul Haq from associating themselves with it. Most of its members were not communists, but were nevertheless sympathetic to communism; and as a British communist I had the additional point, which worked in my favor even among anti-communists, that I was a member of the only significant British political party of the 30s that had unequivocally supported Indian independence.

All this made it easy for me to meet and talk with a great range of writers and scholars on quite informal terms, and I should now say more of some of them, adding while I am about it something about my continuing contacts with them in later years.

My most numerous contacts were with the Progressives. This was not mainly because I myself shared much of their ideology (which I did) but because most of the prominent writers of that time *were* progressives. It was the short story writers that interested me most, and among these, Krishan Chandar the one I saw most of personally. En route home from Bombay in 1950 I stayed with him at his house in Andheri, and I was to stay with him again at the beginning of my 1958 and 1964–65 study leaves. As a man I liked him very much. His great popularity never went to his head and he never resented criticism, which I expressed quite freely. I wrote of him in 1992, "According to a recent study of his work he wrote more than five thousand stories, and judging by the relatively rather small sample I have read, I would think that perhaps 80 per cent of them could be destroyed without literature suffering any great loss thereby. But the best of his stories are excellent. More than those of any of his contemporaries, they make a direct, simple, almost naïve appeal to his readers' deepest human sympathies, and stories of this kind are numerous enough to ensure him a permanent place among the great writers of Urdu literature."

Ismat Chughtai I admired for her forthrightness, as I did Manto for his. Krishan Chandar's "Kālū Bhangī" and Ismat's "Nannhī kī Nānī" were the first Urdu short stories that I translated.

In literary criticism, two of the most prominent in those days were Ihtisham Husain and Ale Ahmad Sarur. Ihtisham Sahib I liked as a man, but such of his critical essays as I read I found distinctly off-putting. I remember thinking with indignation how no one reading his essay on Mir

Hasan's *Sihru 'l-Bayān* could ever imagine what a great and lovely poem it is. He had been co-translator of the chapter on dialectical and historical materialism in the 1939 addition to communist holy writ *The Short History of the C.P.S.U.(B)*, i.e., of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), and seemed never to have got over it. (Pointless reference to "productive forces," "relations of production," etc., abound in his essays.)

Sarur wrote in a much more pleasing style, but I always felt that such of his essays as I read were all rather light-weight stuff. I later formed a very poor opinion of him, though personal relations with him were always amicable. In the middle fifties he moved from Lucknow to Aligarh, where he soon became head of the Urdu department and secretary of the Indian Anjuman-e Taraqqī-e Urdū (Society for the advancement of Urdu). He held these positions for many years and continued in Aligarh until his retirement in 1972. Of his performance (or, more accurately, lack of performance) as Secretary of the Anjuman, perhaps the less said the better. I later learnt that he had come to Aligarh at the invitation of Zakir Husain to take up a professorship financed by Ozai-Durrani, an old friend of Zakir Sahib who had long ago emigrated to USA and made a fortune there. The professorship was to provide its incumbent the opportunity to translate Ghalib's verse into English. Sarur was supposed to be doing that, but he kept remarkably quiet about it. During the year 1964–65, when I was in Aligarh and in frequent touch with him, he never mentioned this matter to me. I don't know when he eventually finished the job and submitted it to Ozai-Durrani, but Zakir Sahib told me in 1965 that Ozai-Durrani was so incensed with what Sarur had produced that he wanted to institute legal proceedings against him. But it would take many pages to tell all that could be told about Sarur's disservices to Urdu.

I spoke earlier of my opinion of such of Ihtisham's, and Sarur's essays as I had read. I should add that these were not many. I have always felt that before reading essays on, e.g., Nazir Akbarabadi I should read Nazir Akbarabadi—and once having done that I don't usually feel any great desire to read people's essays about him.

I didn't see much of the poets, and read very little of their work. I heard Josh Malihabadi reciting his *rubā'īs* in Delhi, and a very impressive performance it was, but in brief meetings with him, both there and later in Pakistan, I found his arrogance rather off-putting, though I liked his boldness and straightforwardness. Majaz I liked a lot. He was already practically an alcoholic but a warm-hearted man whose wit was prover-

bial. I once heard him recite at a *mushā'ira* one of his most popular poems, *Āvāra*, a poem full of striking imagery delivered in a way which well expressed his character.

Of my fellow communists, I saw most of Abdul Alim, who eventually became Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh, but I was visited briefly by Rashid Jahan. At the time I knew nothing of her writing (which I now greatly admire) and our talk was mostly of politics—a talk in which she attacked forthrightly my and the British Communist Party's (as she thought) very reformist brand of communism. But I liked very much the little I saw of her and in later years warmed very much to the personality revealed in Sajjad Zahir's account of her in *Raushnā'ī*, his history of the P.W.A.

You will have noticed throughout this account that I got to know many of those I have mentioned much better than I ever got to know their works. In 1949–50 that was inevitable. I was there to make contacts with as wide a circle of teachers, scholars and writers as I could, and to do more than that was impossible. But that experience was in itself of the greatest value to me and stood me in good stead in later years.

Teaching—and Learning—at SOAS

Now that I was to start teaching at SOAS I wrote out a statement of what I thought my priorities should be. I have kept it, and here it is, in full:

Urdu Studies in England

The Scarborough Commission, which was appointed by the British Government towards the end of the war, recommended greatly increased attention to the development of Oriental Studies in Britain. Its general conclusions apply with full force to Urdu studies.

The most serious obstacle to the satisfactory development of Urdu studies in England lies in the fact that far too few students are entering this field of work. In my opinion there is every likelihood in the immediate future that even those few students at present studying Urdu will turn to other pursuits and that none will be forthcoming to take their place.

Many measures are needed to right this situation, so that

- a) students may be attracted to Urdu studies and
- b) the major obstacles which make it difficult for them to pursue these studies may be removed.

1) Experience shows that up to the present the most important factor which produced in Englishmen a desire to take up the study of Urdu was actual residence in India during the period of the war and the immediate post-war period. This factor has now ceased to operate. Therefore it is necessary to find some other way of creating as widespread as possible an interest in Urdu among the British public. The best way of doing this is to make available in English translations those Urdu literary works which are most likely to arouse such interest. These works will not necessarily be representative of the highest literary achievement of Urdu literature. In my opinion, a number of factors combine to make first the *novel*, and after that the *short story*, the most suitable form of literature for translation.

2) Even those Englishmen who feel sufficiently attracted to Urdu to take up an Honours course in the subject find themselves faced with formidable difficulties. We are concerned here primarily with difficulties implicit in the study of Urdu as such, but it should be noted in passing that these difficulties become all the more formidable when one considers that:

a) no facilities for the study of Urdu exist in English schools, and hence most students entering upon a B.A. course do so with little or no previous knowledge of the language.

b) they have to attain in 3 years a standard which, although somewhat lower than that expected in an Indian University, is nevertheless very difficult for an English student to achieve.

The removal of all possible obstacles in the student's work therefore becomes doubly important. These obstacles may be briefly summed up in the statement that most of the facilities which exist for the student of, say, French, do not exist for the student of Urdu. Dictionaries and grammars are out of date; only a very few clearly printed and annotated texts, prepared specially for the English student, are in existence, and the great majority of these consists of works of the Fort William period [c.1800]. On a whole range of topics with which the student needs to be familiar if he is to understand Urdu literature, no satisfactory short treatment in English exists. The Urdu script is a formidable difficulty to the new student, not only because it is incapable of representing the sounds of the language without the aid of diacritical marks (which are almost invariably omitted in printed texts) but also because the absence of punctuation and the almost universal practice of writing without

leaving a space between one word and the next confuses the reader.

In the light of these observations it appears to me that it is incumbent upon English scholars working in the field of Urdu to give precedence to the following practical tasks:

(i) The publication of translations of Urdu work which would have a broad appeal to the British public at large. These will be mostly Urdu novels and short stories. (Example, Prem Chand's *Ga'odān*)

(ii) The preparation of good critical editions of standard Urdu works. These editions should meet the following requirements:

a) The *text* should be clearly printed either in Prof. Firth's modified Roman script, *or* in Urdu script, but with proper spacing between words, with proper punctuation, and with full diacritical marks (*zabar, zēr, pēsh, jazm, tashdīd*, etc.). Possibly in the earlier part of the work Prof. Firth's script could be used, and a change over to the Urdu script made in the latter part.

b) *Notes* in English should accompany the text.

c) A *vocabulary* should be provided.

d) If possible a *translation* should be published as a companion volume, or facing the text as in the Loeb Classical Library.

One of the first texts to be so edited should be Hali's *Shi'r-o-Shā'irī*.

(iii) A "Handbook to Urdu Studies," or a series of pamphlets serving the same purpose, should be produced, treating briefly of all those subjects knowledge of which constitutes the essential background for the understanding and appreciation of Urdu literature. Thus for the understanding of Urdu poetry some knowledge of the following subjects is essential:

a) Prosody

b) Rhetoric

c) Sufism

d) The concept of love in Urdu poetry

e) Allusions

In addition, for the background of the literature as a whole, a brief treatment of the following themes is also necessary:

f) The main tenets and social practices of Islam

g) A sketch of Arabic and Persian literature

h) Outline history of North India and the Deccan:^{*}

—From the Muslim invasions to Aurangzeb

—From the decline of the Mughal Empire to 1857

—From 1857 to the present day

j) Outline of the history of the language

(iv) Two volumes of selections (one of prose and one of verse) edited for English students in the way described under (ii) above, and representative of the whole range of Urdu literature, should be prepared. Some existing selection (e.g., *Adabī Shīrāzē*) could be utilized if found suitable. Otherwise a fresh selection could be made.

(v) An annotated series of graduated readers, such as those used in Indian schools, should be prepared to assist the student in learning the language.

(vi) A book of suitable passages for translation from English into Urdu should be compiled, the English and Urdu versions being printed on opposite pages with notes explaining points of importance.

A great deal of material is already available for much of this work. Thus a simple translation of Salim Panipati's long essay on "*talmīḥāt*" would suffice for the subject, while Dr. Masud Husain's short essays on the Urdu language provide concise material for a sketch of its history. Some English materials are also available. Thus Pybus's short treatment of Urdu Prosody and Rhetoric (now virtually unobtainable) is quite satisfactory and simply requires reprinting. The same applies, e.g., to Dennison Ross's 75 pp. outline of Islam, Gibb's 100 pp. sketch of Arabic Literature, etc., etc.

But a number of subjects have not been covered at all, as far as I have been able to ascertain, though it is more than likely that works exist of which I have no present knowledge—if not in English, at any rate in Urdu. It is important that these subjects should be covered as soon as possible.

English scholars will not be able to accomplish these tasks without the active assistance of Indian scholars. It goes without saying that Indian scholars and organizations can hardly be expected to spend precious time and resources on the more humdrum of the tasks outlined above; but wherever they feel that the fulfillment of anyone of these tasks would benefit Urdu as a whole their help

^{*}With emphasis on the social and literary aspects.

should be sought and welcomed.

Ralph Russell
[January 1951]

I showed it to Harley at my first meeting with him when the October term began. He read it, smiled benevolently, and said that clearly it was time for him to retire and leave the field to me. It puzzled me when he went on to ask, "What are you going to do your Ph.D. on?" I said, "I'm not going to do a Ph.D." He was taken aback and it was clear that my answer had surprised him even more than his question had surprised me, which had been, as they say, more than somewhat. "Why not?" he said. I said, "My interest is in Urdu literature. Four years ago I had not read a single work of Urdu literature. If I had been a student of French, and had started reading French literature only four years ago, do you think anyone would have thought me fit to do a Ph.D. on it?" This argument impressed him not at all, and after a pause he said, "If you were to do a Ph.D., what would you do it on?" "Ghalib," I said. He was most alarmed. "Don't do it on Ghalib," he said. "Why not?" I asked. He said, "There are numerous people in India and Pakistan who are experts on Ghalib and will criticize what you write." I said, "I would expect that, and would welcome it." He said, "Why don't you work on Hatim?" I said, "Because I have absolutely no interest in Hatim." He was greatly worried by all this and said we must go and see Brough, who was by now head of department. I was puzzled to find that he too was disturbed by my stand, and said we must see the Director about it. Fortunately for me the Director was a man who didn't like confrontations, and after a bit he said, "Well, Russell, some of us feel that it is better to concentrate on publishing, and then go for a D. Litt."—which is what *he* had done! (You get a D. Litt. by publishing numerous articles, and preferably one or two books, in your field of study, and then sending these with an application for the award of a D. Litt. to the university authorities, who then appoint a committee to decide the matter.) Back with Brough, he suggested that I needn't start working for a Ph.D. but should register for one, since this would enable me to complete it in a shorter time when I *did* start working for it. I agreed to do this, but never did. Just to complete the story, three or four years later he sent for me and asked me, "Did you ever register for a Ph.D.?" "No." I said. "Oh, good!" he said. "But I thought you wanted me to," I said. "Yes," he said, "I did. But now we have an applicant for a

Ph.D. and you would be the obvious person to supervise him. It would look very odd if we made you supervisor when you yourself were registered for a Ph.D.”

This was my first major encounter with academic idiocy. Apart from my obvious unfitness to do a Ph.D. at this stage, it was equally obvious that the conclusions which ought to have followed from the recommendations of the Scarbrough Commission were not being taken seriously. The Scarbrough measures had enabled SOAS to take on additional academic staff, and so far as SOAS was concerned it seemed that was that.

The steps needed to build up an Urdu department were clearly those that my note had indicated, and Brough, as well as Harley, had seen my plan and approved it. (My copy has his marginal comments in red.) To concentrate my energies on these would in any case clearly have ruled out the possibility of doing a Ph.D. at the same time. It follows that neither of them took my proposals seriously. Academia is academia. First priority for SOAS, and for me, must in their view be to enhance my qualifications, and the well-recognized next step was to do a Ph.D. Well, I was much more interested in building up Urdu studies than in furthering my career in any conventional way. I acted accordingly and in fact am to the best of my abilities still acting accordingly fifty years later.

Having crossed this hurdle I took up the task of reforming the Urdu syllabus. Harley quite agreed that this needed doing, but, to my great surprise, he raised objections to including in the set books Rusva's novel (the autobiography of a Lucknow courtesan) *Umrā'ō Jān Adā*. "Some of the students' parents might object," he said. I had never before, and have never since, heard of parents to whom it would occur to try and censor a university syllabus. (I may say in passing, though, that Indian and Pakistani university teachers expressed surprise at this. "Do you teach it to your *girl* students too?" they asked.) Rather more significant was his reaction when I suggested texts which I knew to be important but had not yet read myself. "But how will you teach them?" he asked. I said, "I'll read them, and where there's anything I don't understand I'll ask Bilgrami to explain it to me." It dawned upon me then that he himself had never read anything with me that *he* had not at one time read, and that "my old munshi" was the source of the notes with which, e.g., the margins of *Nazm-e Muntakhab* were filled. And this idea of an Englishman in charge of a department asking to be enlightened by an Indian subordinate was to him clearly such a subversive one that he found it difficult even to grasp it.

Anyway I proceeded as I had proposed, and felt no hesitation in

asking the help not only of colleagues but of students. Thus I read *Umrā'ō Jān Adā* with Amina Ahmed (now Amina Ahuja), who was taking Urdu as an easy option as one subject in a three subject B.A. General degree. (To my regret, this degree no longer exists.) She was the daughter of an English mother and an Indian father (Nuruddin, who years later became mayor of Delhi) and was completely bilingual in Urdu and English. But though she spoke Urdu fluently, she had learnt it mainly from the family servants and from Urdu-speaking children during her childhood in Delhi, and she had read very little Urdu literature. So we worked very well together, with me telling her the meanings of literary words she did not know, and her instructing me in the colloquial idiom that I did not know.

Thus, in one way or another, I both improved the Urdu syllabus and made myself more and more competent to teach it. And of course it was necessary to continue doing both these things throughout my years at SOAS.

The first important step was to lengthen the B.A. honors course. Fortunately I was not the only teacher who saw the need to do this, and the normal course was extended from three to four years. This gave us the opportunity of giving the students the whole of the first year to get a really thorough grounding in the language and only in the third term to begin reading the literature, beginning with twentieth-century short stories. The emphasis, however, continued to be on reading and writing, and not on speaking. I thought then, and for many years afterwards, that the syllabus load made the teaching of spoken fluency impossible, and I told students they must learn this themselves, out of class, by practicing conversing in Urdu with the many postgraduate students in the SOAS student body. I now think I *could* have structured the teaching in such a way as to make acquisition of spoken fluency possible, but it was not until the early 1970s that I learnt how to do this.

The second step was to provide in the syllabus for a far more adequate representative coverage of the whole range of Urdu literature without at the same time increasing the total load. This was partially achieved over the years, but some of the desirable selections—e.g., from the *Dāstān-e Amīr Ḥamza*, Sarshar's *Fasāna-e Āzād* and Shibli's *Safarnāma*—were never in fact made and remained what my colleague Christopher Shackle, bluntly but accurately, once described as dummy entries.

My colleagues and I had considerable flexibility in deciding, in consultation with our students which bits of the prescribed texts we could

decide *not* to teach and not to examine, and we did this. Even so, the syllabus remained an unsatisfactory one. Over the years I wrote handouts giving guidance to the students—one for those applicants who had contemplated taking Urdu but had not yet definitely decided, one for first year students, one for those entering their second year, and so on. I never gave up the attempt to provide more space for oral attainment, but didn't get very far with this. Right up to the time of my retirement the convention was that the student's class—first, upper second, lower second, or third—was assessed on his/her performance in the written papers. There was an oral exam at the end of the course but the convention was that a good oral performance might result in upgrading but a poor one would *not* result in downgrading. There was general resistance from the modern language teachers to the idea that oral competence should be required of all students, and some people who live in the real world outside SOAS may find it difficult to understand this. In the first place, of course, oral competence could not be imparted to students by teachers who were themselves not orally competent, and not many of them were.

Secondly the prevailing view of “true scholars” is that colleagues who are good teachers constitute a sort of lower caste than those whose real or alleged competence in research makes them regard teaching skill as something they need not, and should not, trouble themselves to acquire. And thirdly, within that lower caste, the lowest sub-caste is that of people who *speak* the language they teach. Anyway a modern South Asian language in the view of the Sanskritists who have generally until recent years been accorded a sort of divine right to head the India Department, doesn't really rate much as an academic subject. (And Brough more than once said to me, “People who want to learn to speak should go to Berlitz.”) A later head of department rejected my criticism of a colleague who couldn't speak the language he taught, saying that “just because he can't jabber” (his exact words) he was not open to criticism. The same head criticized an Indian colleague for not having published much. He pointed out that he *had* published numerous articles in his own language. “Oh,” he was told, “but they're all in your own lingo.” (Again, his exact words.) The man was too flabbergasted to respond, but in speaking to me about it afterwards he made the valid point that to teachers of his “lingo” these articles should be as accessible, and as valued, as they would have been if he had written them in English.

Anyway, believe it or not, I can assure you that at any rate in my time at SOAS to be a good teacher was to forfeit some of the esteem of the academic establishment, and to be able to speak fluently the language you

taught was to forfeit it still further.

In view of all this resistance I tried to get the equivalent of one 3-hour paper in oral competence included as an *option* in the syllabus, with a corresponding reduction in the reading load of those who chose to take it. But this proposal too failed to win support. As the years went by I began to feel strongly that the syllabus should allow students to select from a whole range of options, and that until it did I should myself help them to pursue their particular interests regardless of what the syllabus said. In a note I circulated in July 1974 to students entering their second year I wrote:

The course which you will be following from now on is naturally, and necessarily, geared to the requirements of the present syllabus and of the final examination. Before I spell out the implications of that, let me first say two things. First, I do not imply by this that either the syllabus or the methods of examining it are immutable. On the contrary, my own view is that substantial changes are needed in both. You are welcome to read and discuss my own proposals about this, and equally welcome to put forward proposals of your own. Secondly, if any of you want to pursue an interest in the field of Urdu which the syllabus does not adequately cater for, I am quite prepared to help you do this, and am at the same time more than willing to press for modifications in the syllabus to allow scope for such interests. You must of course understand that, pending such changes being introduced, concentration on such an interest could weaken your position at the final examination; but if after thinking seriously about this you feel that this is a price you are prepared to pay, I shall make no objection, and indeed will help you to the best of my ability.

If one problem was working out what should be taught, another was working out how to teach it. For quite a number of years I and my overseas colleagues—Khurshidul Islam from 1953–56, Aziz Ahmad from 1957–61, Ibadat Barelavi from 1961–66 and Khalid Hasan Qadiri after that—taught as *I* had been taught, with students sitting at the feet (so to speak) of a teacher and having the texts read and explained. It was not until David Matthews and Christopher Shackle joined me in the second half of the sixties that better and more economical methods were evolved. It was they who produced duplicated word lists of the kind I described earlier, so that in the course of time we had these for Mir's *masnavi*

Mu'āmalat-e 'Ishq (Matthews), Mir Hasan's *maṣnavī Siḥru'l-Bayān* (Shackle), Anis's *marṣiya jab qaṭ'a kī musāfat-e shab āftāb nē* (Matthews and Aqil Danish), Navvab Mirza Shauq's *maṣnavī Zahr-e 'Ishq* (word list by, I think, Shackle, and a literal translation which was my own sole contribution to this exercise), twenty letters of Ghalib (selection by me, word list by Shackle), Hali's *Musaddas* (Matthews), Hali's *Muqaddama-e She'r-o-Shā'iri* (Shackle), Rusva's novel *Umrā'ō Jān Adā* (I think Matthews), four of the longer poems of Iqbal (Matthews), four of Prem Chand's short stories (Matthews), and a short selection of twentieth-century poems by Iqbal (2), Faiz (2) and Josh, Sahir, and Rashid (1 each)—texts with vocabulary and notes (Matthews). Matthews and Shackle also produced, and got Oxford University Press to publish, their *Anthology of Urdu Love Lyrics*, a valuable book marred by quite a large number of inexcusable mistakes, some of these quite glaring. (They had not had their ms. rigorously checked, and for reasons best known to themselves had produced it without the knowledge of, let alone consultation with, me or Khalid Hasan Qadiri.)

At a seminar on language teaching held in May 1969 I suggested the way in which such word lists should be used and subsequently wrote up and circulated a handout about it, of which the relevant part reads:

My aim is as soon as possible to reach a position where class-time is used exclusively for what can only be done in class. Over the years we have spent far too long telling students orally what can equally well be given them in writing. ... Ideally I would *annotate* all texts, and, where this seems called for, provide literal translations of exceptionally difficult pieces. ... *Discussion* in class will, I think, continue to be essential, and the *teacher* will very often need to pose the questions. I see no insuperable difficulty about ensuring that the student studies the text in the exhaustive way required of him. Samples can be taken of passages the students have prepared, and they can be questioned on them in class in considerable detail—questions covering grammar, usage, figures of speech, meter, characterization, context and every other aspect the teacher chooses. This should be a regular feature of the teaching. In general I would make this the typical pattern in using class-time.

I think I am right in saying that it was Christopher Shackle who used this method most effectively—and had probably worked it all out long before I had.

My own efforts were employed in other directions. I had from the start taken on most of the elementary teaching, and I planned over the years to produce a language course, a volume of annotated passages for rapid reading, a series of conversations on tape, and graded passages to exercise students in translation from English into Urdu and unseen translation from Urdu into English. I want to say a word or two about each of these. My language course was published (by myself—see below) under the title of *Essential Urdu*. In the Preface I explained why I had felt the need to write it.

When this course was in draft, it came to the notice of a Spanish lady married to a Pakistani. She had for some time been looking without success for a book which would help her in learning Urdu. I was told that she read a few pages and then remarked: “I can learn from *this* book; it’s written for human beings.” I would not myself subscribe to the harsh judgement of other courses which these words imply, but I saw what she meant, and no praise could have given me greater satisfaction; for it was my own acute awareness of the need of a course “for human beings” that had prompted me to write it.

At the time when I started work on it the Urdu language courses generally available in Britain fell into two categories. In the first were the old-style “grammars,” dating from the days of the British Raj. The best of them are not without their merits—their explanations are clear and simple, and presentation of the language material is carefully graded to meet the learner’s needs—but they belong to an extinct world, a world in which every Britisher was in some sense a representative of the ruling power, whose needs could be met by text-books which, as a student once complained, “all seemed to be written in the imperative.” In most of them the English student was taught to address practically all Indians (Pakistan had not yet been created) as *tum*, the equivalent of “you” reserved mainly for juniors, subordinates and social inferiors, and to call himself *ham*, a sort of royal “we” which even the most exalted in Urdu-speaking society have not normally used in speaking of themselves. And along with learning how to command he learnt also how to complain. Even the best of these old-style text-books that I have seen includes in its very first lesson such sentences as “You are not very smart” and “The tea is not fresh.”

In the second category came books which attempted to meet

more contemporary needs. The language of command and complaint was abandoned; but so, unfortunately, were some of the best features of the older books. These had been quite right *not* to tell their readers (as one of their successors does in its first pages) that “Arabic infinitives of the forms IV to VIII, and X are almost all masculine” or that (in such a sentence as “*us kē aur kō’ī bačča nahīn*”) “It must be remembered that this *kē* is an old oblique case.” Moreover, what replaced the language of command and complaint was all too often sentence material in the “pen of my aunt” tradition. In the same book there are sentences which range from “Mongooses become tame if you love them” through “Some rams have four horns,” and “The rajah met a splendid elephant on the metalled road” to the more intriguing, if scarcely more useful, “Village girls easily get confused and cry.”

In short, if the older books were addressed to representatives of the Raj, the newer ones seem to have been addressed to Englishmen who had studied Latin at school in the twenties and thirties, and had been taught French in much the same style, without too much regard to the fact that, unlike Latin, French is a language still very much alive.

In a third category came the Urdu teaching materials from across the Atlantic which have become available in recent years. But these too, good though some of them are, did not meet the needs that I had in mind; for they too assumed things in the learners (notably, all too often, a certain familiarity with phonetics and linguistics) which I did not think should be assumed.

I determined therefore to write a course for the kind of people in Britain today who want to learn Urdu, people who want to communicate with Urdu speakers on terms of mutual respect, and in order to do so more fully and adequately, want to learn their language. I would write as one normal adult speaking to others, and, knowing that some of them would have had no previous experience, and most of them no recent experience, of leaning a foreign language, I would not make the assumptions which only such experience would have warranted my making.

Throughout I tried to keep this kind of learner constantly in mind, and successive generations (so to speak) of learners have at my own request actively helped me to do so, telling me where I was failing to get across to them and helping me to remedy inadequacies. Now, after the course has been through this process five times, I feel

that it is ready for publication.

The course was completed in 1971, but not published until 1974. I explained why in a foreword:

Those who note the date of this Foreword and then, when they come to the end of the Preface, note that it is dated April, 1971, may wonder why more than three years have elapsed between the completion of this course and its publication. The reason is essentially a very simple one—my own determination that it should not be published at a price that would put it beyond the reach of those for whom I wrote it.

Less simple to understand, perhaps, are the processes which were set in motion when I began to act upon this determination. Having discovered, without much difficulty, that ordinary commercial publication would have resulted in a very expensive volume, and knowing that, equally certainly, so would publication by the processes through which more abstruse works of scholarship ultimately reach their very limited market, I approached the School of Oriental and African Studies, where I have been a full-time teacher of Urdu since 1949 with the suggestion that the School itself should publish it, and in its present format.

What happened next is worth relating in a little more detail than I supplied in the Foreword. Knowing by this time how traditional academic procedures worked I had written to all members of the Publications Committee, “... may I venture to suggest that the usual procedure of sending the book to a referee be dispensed with? Mr. Bracken [the Secretary of SOAS] once told me that this is sometimes done, in cases where the Publications Committee feels satisfied from the outset that the work is of adequate standard, and if I am not mistaken, the recent volume of essays on Ghalib edited by, and including two essays by, myself was treated in this way.”

This suggestion was not accepted. “... [T]he Committee did not feel able to depart from its normal rules of procedure ... by dispensing with the opinions of independent referees ...”

Who these independent referees were, and what, if any, were their qualifications for assessing my work, I have never bothered to ask. It was presumably in the light of their opinions that the Committee decided that

... it would be prepared to consider publication of the work ... subject to ... curtailment of the Introduction by the omission of that part of it which precedes paragraph 2 on page ii (with any necessary consequential amendments); and to the elimination from the body of the work of instances of what might be called “parochialism,” e.g., Volume I, part 2, page 237, exercise A; Volume II, part I, pages 50–51, exercise B.

The omissions they required were: (1) the passage of the Foreword I have already quoted, explaining my reasons for producing the course; (2) the following passage (and presumably the annotated Urdu passage of which it is a translation):

I was born on 21st May 1918. I was educated at various schools from 1923 to 1937, and in 1937 began my university education at St. John’s College, Cambridge. For the first two years I read Classics (i.e. Latin and Greek), and in my last year I studied geography. I took my degree in 1940. I was then called up into the army. (In those days there was conscription in Britain.) I served in the army from June 1940 to June 1946. Three years and five months of this period—from March 1942 to August 1945—were spent in India, where I was attached to the Indian Army. In October 1946 I was awarded a studentship at S.O.A.S., where I took a second degree in Urdu (with Sanskrit as my subsidiary subject) in 1949. I was then appointed as a lecturer in Urdu, and have been teaching here ever since.

and (3) a dialogue (headed “Coming to SOAS”) in which a student discussed with me her interview for a place at SOAS in which she made some not very flattering comments on the interviewers. Thus the dialogue included this exchange:

- R. Whom did you see when you came for interview?
 D. First, Mr. Clark, and then Professor Brough and Dr. Gaur.
 R. What sort of questions did they ask you?
 D. None of the questions I had expected. I was very nervous, but I had thought about why I wanted to come to university and why I wanted to do Hindi. But I wasn’t asked.
 R. Were you surprised?
 D. Yes, very!

I feel sure that the objections to (1) and (3) were motivated by a reluctance to see any adverse comments on SOAS and its past and present staff in print. The deliberately unnamed book which the third paragraph of my Introduction criticizes was *Teach Yourself Urdu* prepared by A.H. Harley and Prof. Firth from materials by T. Grahame Bailey—and some of the members of the Publications Committee would undoubtedly know this.

The objection to (2) was, I imagine, inspired by the feeling behind the idiotic convention that an author should never speak of himself/herself as “I” and instead of saying, e.g., “In my opinion” (which is what he/she means) must say “in the opinion of the present writer” or some such foolishness. Anyway, I wrote to say that since I could see “no *academic* argument whatever for making the changes proposed” I was therefore not willing to make them.

I then asked the School to allow me to publish the course myself, and for that purpose to make available to me the stencils from which multiple copies could be produced. This, in a letter dated 25th October, 1973, it agreed to do “... on condition that it shall not bear the imprint of the School and shall not contain any statement leading purchasers to suppose that it is published on behalf of the School.”

I concluded my Foreword by quoting these words, and continued,

I am grateful to the School for permitting me to publish the course on these terms, and am happy to accept the conditions laid down, especially that which requires me to make it clear that the course is published by myself and not by the School.

I have, of course, none of the usual facilities available to a commercial publisher, but I have now been able to produce a modest stock of copies, and shall be happy to supply, with no greater delay than I can help, copies to those who want them, at the price it costs me to produce them, plus a charge for packing and postage.

In later years the Extramural Division of SOAS reprinted the course.

There is more to be said about the offending passage in my Foreword. It has always seemed to me that you should begin by answering the question which your readers are bound to ask, “Urdu language courses already exist. Why do you need to write a new one?” I have repeatedly felt the same about translators of, e.g., Faiz. None of them says why a new translation is needed, and one is compelled to wonder whether perhaps

they don't want their readers even to know that other people have worked in the field before them.

With regard to the other projected teaching materials, I feel most satisfied with the collection of tapes I made. By 1972 these already numbered about 60, and more were added later. I was determined that students who never learnt to *speak* fluently should at any rate, so to speak, learn to *listen* fluently and learn to understand spoken as well as written Urdu. Almost all the tapes are of natural, unscripted conversations between me and Urdu-speaking friends and acquaintances. In a handout for students I wrote of them " ... in *all* the conversations in which I play a part, my own part is minimal. The Urdu I speak is not always clear and not always 100% correct. My participation was designed simply to keep the conversation going in a free and relaxed way, and to guide it along lines which would interest British hearers."

My Urdu course, *Essential Urdu*, requires that students listen to tapes, learn to identify relevant Urdu passages from an English translation, and transcribe other passages, and I think this has equipped them with valuable skills. Some of those whose dialogues with me I have recorded are well-known names—Ismat Chughtai, Faiz, Zoe Ansari, Ustad Imrat Khan and Ibadat Barelavi, for example. But many are not. I was at pains to record numbers of different speakers of both sexes, so that students would not have to face the same difficulty as I had faced when I first went to Aligarh and which I have described above. Other tapes are recordings of Urdu texts—Khurshidul Islam reciting the whole of *Zahr-e 'Ishq* and the whole of the first chapter of *Taubatu 'n-Nuṣūb*, Khalid Hasan Qadiri reciting selected ghazals, and so on.

Next in order of preference, so to speak, came my collections of English passages with Urdu translations. During most of my time at SOAS I was examiner for the Urdu exams set by the University of London and, less regularly, Oxford. The syllabuses for these exams left a very great deal to be desired, but anyway, one requirement was that the candidate had to translate unseen from English into Urdu. At the Ordinary Level, candidates were mostly 15–16-year-olds, and the passages were short pieces of about 150 words of simple prose. I collected these over the years and had good Urdu translations of them made, mostly by Khalid Hasan Qadiri, with a few by Aqil Danish, and used them as teaching materials for my own students from about half way through their first year course. Sometimes I would give them the Urdu version to translate, and sometimes the English one; and they could then compare their efforts with the passages I would hand out to them. Since translation from English continued to be

required right up to the B.A. honors degree, I followed the same procedure with more and more difficult passages. At every level I selected passages which would be thought-provoking—for instance, at the more difficult end of the scale, C.S. Lewis on how to read the literature of another age, Raymond Williams on the role of patronage in pre-modern times and the role of publishers today, and Ian Stephens comparing and contrasting Israel and Pakistan. Some of the English passages were translations or adaptations from Urdu originals. Most of the “fair copies” of the translations from English were done by Khalid Hasan Qadiri, and, in later years, by Safia K. Siddiqi. All of them were discussed with me before being finalized.

The annotated readings in everyday Urdu were never completed to my satisfaction, and though I eventually collected and published all I had prepared I never managed to extend their scope to the extent I had wanted to. It is only fair to record here that the SOAS authorities were very helpful to me in preparing these readings and the “fair copies” of the Urdu translations of the English passages. Through the mediation of Ibadat Barelavi I got his calligrapher Abdul Haq to do the calligraphy of all this material, and SOAS paid for it. To which I must however add that it was quite by accident that I discovered that SOAS had a fund earmarked for financing the production of teaching materials, and seems never to have made this fact generally known. When I mentioned it to a teacher in another department, I found she had never heard of it, and when she spoke to her head of department he did nothing to encourage her to apply for a grant.

The only other thing I published in this field of teaching materials was *A Primer of Urdu Verse Metre* (1974)—or rather, this was the only other product of the period when my intended readers were, in the main, university students. The products of a later period, dating from just before my retirement in 1981, I shall speak of later.

Publication

My experience of the SOAS establishment’s reaction to my refusal to do a Ph.D. was rapidly followed by a realization that research (or at any rate “research”) was all-important in the eyes of the establishment, as also in the eyes of those who made their own advancement their main aim. In their view, no real scholar must be expected to teach well, still less to become fluent in the language he was teaching and learn how to teach

that fluency to his/her students. All this ought to have told me that if my position at SOAS and my prospects of advancement were to be secure I must publish. Well, I had no objection to that. My own plans had publication as a central part of them. What in my continuing simplicity I didn't realize was first, that I was expected to publish without delay and secondly, that publication meant publication of a particular kind—a kind that demonstrated to the establishment that you were “working at the frontiers of knowledge,” etc., etc.—proving, for example, that the earliest manuscript of a work was not one of 1723 but one newly discovered (by yourself) which dated from 1717, or that the hitherto generally accepted characterization of an obscure literary movement of the middle of the nineteenth century was not tenable. When, if ever, Urdu studies in the West have advanced far, far beyond their present stage there may be a better case than there is now for studies of that kind, but they never *will* advance until we have first produced substantial numbers of scholars who have a thorough grasp of the Urdu language and its major literary achievements, and writing which contributes significantly to the creation of such scholars ought to have priority.

My own writing aimed, and still aims, at making that contribution, first by making it possible for students to learn the language well, and secondly by making it possible to understand and appreciate the best of its literature. In this latter field I began during my second year of study leave (1958) with translations of two stories by contemporary writers—Krishan Chandar's “Kālū Bhangī” and Ismat Chughtai's “Nannhī kī Nānī” (“Tiny's Granny”). These were minor contributions to a very ambitious project formulated by Khurshidul Islam and me (on *his* initiative) during his years as my “overseas lecturer” colleague at SOAS in 1953–56. The project was to present to the English-speaking world all that was best in Urdu literature from the eighteenth century—the time of Mir and Sauda—to the present day. Work on what, more than ten years later, was published as *Three Mughal Poets: Mir, Sauda and Mir Hasan* was already underway before Khurshid's period as overseas lecturer came to an end. We had thought we could forge ahead quite rapidly with this work. There was provision for the extension of the three-year period of the overseas lectureship to a maximum of five years, and we thought that Khurshid's tenure would be extended in this way. Moreover, as my note of 1951 had predicted, the supply of students had practically dried up. In fact, in Khurshid's last year there had been no entrants to Urdu courses at all. We did not see this as a factor that would influence SOAS's decision about a further two years' extension for him, for the Scarbrough Report

had emphasized that while the necessary resources for expanding Oriental studies were being built up, presence or absence of student demand should not be regarded as a significant factor. We therefore looked forward to a year or two in which we would be able to spend the greatest part of our time on the project we had formulated. However, the SOAS establishment decided otherwise, and Khurshid had to return to Aligarh when only about a third of *Three Mughal Poets* had been drafted. I continued work on it on my own until 1958, when I again spent a year's study leave in India and Pakistan. The greatest part of it was spent in Aligarh, where I had the inestimable advantage of living as a member of the family in Khurshid's house, and I had hoped that Khurshid would be able to give enough of his time for us to complete our joint work on the book. For reasons I needn't go into here, that didn't happen, and I had to a great extent to occupy myself with other things. Nevertheless, it was a good year. I read most of *Razmnāma-e Anīs* (see p. 27 above) with Saliha Abid Husain, and Nazir Ahmad's *Ibnu 'l-Vaqt* and Muhiuddin Qadiri Zor's selection of Ghalib's letters with Khurshid's wife Masuda. I also spent longer in Pakistan than I had done in 1950, where Abul Khair Kashfi in Karachi and Ahmad Nadim Qasmi in Lahore (to name only two of many) gave me unstintingly of their time and attention.

It was in that year that I made the acquaintance of Krishna Kripalani, at that time head of the Sahitya Akademi (Indian National Academy of Letters). We took an immediate liking to each other, and it was he who arranged for the publication of a short article on Sauda and of the translations of the stories of Ismat and Krishan Chandar that I have already mentioned. From him I learnt for the first time of UNESCO's East-West major project, part of which was to arrange for the translation of works of literature of Indian (and other) languages into English. And I think it was he who drew my name to the attention of Milton Rosenthal, who at that time was the UNESCO official responsible for that part of the East-West project I have just described. To anticipate a little, I soon developed a very cordial relationship with Milton Rosenthal, and was invited by him (three times, I think) to participate in a "conference of experts" in Paris to advise on problems of the implementation of the project. He and Kripalani between them were able to speed up considerably the workings of the very cumbersome machinery which made it possible for UNESCO to commission translations, and it was thanks to them that Khurshid and I were allotted the work which culminated in 1969, the hundredth anniversary of Ghalib's death, with the publication of *Ghalib, Life and Letters*.

Standard UNESCO procedure at that time was to appoint a translator

whose mother tongue was that into which the work was to be translated, and a reviser whose mother tongue was that of the original. The translator was paid double the rate paid to the reviser. I felt that this didn't fit our case, and Rosenthal agreed to call us a joint translator-reviser team and pay us equally.

Both *Three Mughal Poets* and *Ghalib, Life and Letters* have been republished in recent years by Oxford University Press, Delhi, and those who want to know what we planned to achieve with these books can find out easily enough from the books themselves; so I need not go into that here.

But I want to say something of the history of my early attempts to get a publisher for *Three Mughal Poets*. In the early sixties I had made the acquaintance of Dan Davin, of Oxford University Press. I spoke to him about *Three Mughal Poets* and he expressed an interest in seeing it. I soon ran into difficulties that I might have anticipated. He had invited me to send it in December 1963. By June 1964 I had heard nothing further and I wrote to ask if he had any news to tell me. He replied promptly, "I had hoped to let you have news of it long since, but there was great difficulty in trying to find someone competent to read it, and this lost a lot of time. It is now out with a reader..." I wrote back,

Thank you for your letter of June 8th. I confess it has made me a little apprehensive, for its implication is that competence to read it was thought to involve a familiarity with classical Urdu poetry (—or am I wrong in drawing this conclusion?). Of course I have not the slightest objection to some such person checking that our handling of factual material is accurate, but I should have felt happier if its suitability for publication could have been decided by someone closer to the position of the interested non-specialist for whom the book was written. My experience unfortunately is that the specialist has difficulty in putting himself in the non-specialist's position. I can only hope that your reader is in this respect an exception to the general rule!

I refrained from saying what was by now very much in the forefront of my mind: Who was this person who was allegedly competent to read it? Things are different now, but at that time there wasn't, as far as I knew, any such person. Grahame Bailey or A.H. Harley would have been obvious choices had they still been alive, but they weren't, and I knew of no one whose competence was equal to, let alone greater than, Khurshid's

and mine. If, therefore, someone claimed to be competent, then he or she was (not to put too fine a point on it) a liar, and from such a phony “expert” one could expect a report that would express this phoniness by being at best condescending and at worst dismissive. And that proved to be the case. Dan Davin eventually sent me extracts from the reports of two referees. I haven’t his letter to hand, but I remember well enough that one objected that the book had nothing to say about Hindus and the other thought it extraordinary that it should devote space to discussion of play upon words and other literary devices, “... years after the publication of Empson’s *Seven Types of Ambiguity*.” The first “expert” apparently didn’t know that classical Urdu poetry doesn’t *have* anything to say about Hindus. As for the other comment, we hadn’t written only for people of whom we could assume that they had read Empson’s book. I wrote to Davin to say this—simply to make my position clear, and not in any hope that O.U.P. would change its decision not to publish—and later wrote to Milton Rosenthal about it. He wrote back,

I agree entirely with what you say in your letter to Davin. Personally, I always believe in writing as clearly as possible, and when one wishes to do that, as you evidently do too, one does not take for granted that one’s audience will know certain books which are in fact not at all part of every child’s elementary school course. I for one, have never heard of *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, and I was most grateful for all the clarification you gave not only on the question of poetic conceits, but also on the many other points which you made so clear in your manuscript, at the cost of much effort.

He also suggested that I might have fared better if I had shown the ms. to an American publisher.

It is more common in the States to write without the “I know more than you” tone which is found in the Oxford reader’s report, and American publishers’ readers (in general—there are exceptions) would perhaps welcome your approach ... In the United States there is a much greater welcoming for a desire to educate rather than a desire to be snooty (which, if you will forgive my saying so, is rather characteristic of many people with the same background as the reviewer of your manuscript from Oxford).

But anyway, *Three Mughal Poets* was eventually published.

We had written it without giving any thought to the question of whether or not it would count as a “scholarly publication,” (and in any case it was not until 1968 that it was published). I gathered later that Brough would have felt it could fall in that category, because when I applied for a Readership in 1964 I was told that he felt that the fact that it had not been published should not exclude it from consideration.²

My first submission of anything for publication in a scholarly journal was the article “Some Problems of the Treatment of Urdu Metre,” which I submitted to the *Bulletin of SOAS*. Brough read it and said it was not suitable for the Bulletin. “It’s the kind of article which would be written to help students,” he said. I said, “Yes, it *was* written to help students.” Again, I might have anticipated that the *Bulletin* would not accept it. You have only to look at any issue of the *Bulletin* to see that none of its articles are intelligible to more than the writer and a few others, and that *this*, apparently, is what “scholarly” writing is. So my article eventually appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1960; pp. 48-58), which accepted it, I am sure, only because, at Brough’s own suggestion, I sent it with a covering note saying that I was submitting it with Professor Brough’s approval.³

I never again submitted any article to a British “scholarly” publication, knowing that although articles “written to help students” could and should be of interest to scholars too, this would not be the view of those who produced the scholarly publications in question. I did write reviews for them—always at their request—but that was all.

I was fortunate in that in (I think) 1967 a journal called *South Asian Review* was started, with the avowed aim of publishing expert writing aimed at a general interested readership, and it was for this, until it ceased publication in 1972, that most of my articles were written. The main significant exception was “The Pursuit of the Urdu Ghazal,” which I submitted, without much hope that it would be accepted, to the USA *Journal of Asian Studies* and which appeared there in issue XXIX, 1, pp.

²I may remark in passing that when I had spoken of it he had said he would like to read it, and that he did read it. It pleased me that he remarked of it more than once, “It’s a pleasure to read such good English”—and amused me that he never made *any* comment on the content of the book.

³There is a mistake in it which Aziz Ahmad pointed out to me. I had scanned “vālidain” as though it were “vālidaiñ.” It can, of course, never be so scanned.

107–24 (1969). Years later, in 1974, I submitted the long article by Khurshid and myself on Akbar Ilahabadi⁴ to *Modern Asian Studies*. By this time I must have acquired something of a reputation, because when I phoned the editor beforehand and told him that the article was exceptionally long he at once promised to publish it, no matter how long it was. It appeared in 8:1, pp 1–58.

I also published “On Translating Ghalib” in the USA periodical *Mahfil* (5:4[1969], pp. 71–87) and, years later, “How Not to Write the History of Urdu Literature” in the USA *Annual of Urdu Studies*. (This latter has become, and is likely to remain, the main outlet for my articles. No. 10 carries the first substantial installment of long-promised contributions.)

I continue to regard with ridicule some of the formulae which one can see writers applying in so much of what is published in academic journals. I listed some of these in an article I wrote for limited circulation in 1985, impelled to do so by reading these words in an article by Safder Alladina: “The Weak Form of the Whorf Hypothesis may be more useful in our analysis. It proposes that: language patterns and cultural norms have grown up together and are constantly influencing each other. A language carries within it the imprint of the society that uses it.”

I commented:

You can’t get much more impressive than that! Since no explanation is given of who or what or when Whorf is or was, the gullible reader will conclude that he ought to know, and if he doesn’t, will be even more ready than before to humble himself before the immense learning that the writer displays. He probably won’t pause to register that what Safder tells us this “hypothesis” proposes is not a hypothesis at all, Whorfian or unWhorfian, weak or strong. It is a patent fact, known and accepted throughout the world and throughout the ages by countless millions of people.

In my 1985 article I wrote:

Any reasonably educated person can write this kind of article by following a few simple rules.

First, don’t write anything in plain English if you can find a

⁴It now constitutes Ch. 9 of *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature*.

more pompous, tortuous way of saying what you have to say. (If you can use little known words, so much the better. Examples in Safder's pamphlet, admittedly in most cases quoted from others, are (on pp. 16–17 alone) *idelect*, *etic*, *emic*, *ethnosemantics* and *metalinguistics*.

Secondly, drop as many names, and give as many references, as you can. Most of these can be unnecessary and irrelevant. You don't have to bother about that as long as you can feel fairly sure that your readers won't *realize* that they're unnecessary and irrelevant.

Thirdly, quote other writers who have said (or whom you can represent as having said) what you are saying. Most readers will consider the fact that someone else has said what you are saying as substantial evidence that what you are saying is true. They won't stop to reflect that in fact it isn't any evidence at all, and that unless you, or the writer you quote can present a convincing argument for the proposition being advanced, it shouldn't be accepted.

Fourthly, count on your readers assuming (as, alas, nearly all of them will) first, that you have read all the works you quote, and secondly, that all these works were written by people whose writing needs to be taken very seriously. Both these things, may, of course, be true, but they don't *have* to be true as long as your readers *think* they are.

It used to surprise me (as it no longer does) how easily devices of this kind can impress the gullible, and how numerous the gullible are. A student once remarked to me about one of his lecturers that he knew Persian well.

"How do you know?" I said.

"Well," he replied, "he quotes Persian sources in his lectures."

"And do *you* know Persian?" I asked him.

"No," he said.

"Then how do you know he is quoting correctly? And supposing that he *is* quoting correctly, how do you know that he knows any more Persian than the words he is quoting? I'm not saying that he doesn't—only that you don't *know* that he does and shouldn't therefore assume either that he does or that he doesn't."

Another common trick is to hand out to students long reading lists. You know that it is far too long for any student to study *in toto*, and you give no indication of which items are essential reading and which are not. But then your aim is not to help your students but to show them how immensely learned *you* are.

Another trick is wherever possible to refrain from mentioning anyone else who has written usefully on the themes *you* are writing on, as though only you had anything significant to say on them.

But to return to my own actual and projected publications—I no longer feel that I have any problem of finding an outlet for these—with one significant exception.

Ghalib, Life and Letters was to be followed, again under contract to UNESCO, by a volume of selections from his poetry. *Life and Letters* had included a representative selection of all Ghalib's prose, both Urdu and Persian, and Khurshid and I planned to produce in this second volume an equally comprehensive selection of all his Urdu and Persian verse. The history of this project is a long and complicated one. It was interrupted by numerous delays, and we eventually decided that we must, for the present at least, confine ourselves to the Urdu and Persian ghazals. By the end of 1987 we had produced what I regarded as a satisfactory selection. Khurshid refused to accept this, and insisted that we needed to add to it. But in spite of every effort on my part to enable him to contribute his share to this, including a month-long visit to stay in his house in Aligarh (March–April 1988), he was never ready to take up the work again. In 1991 I felt I could wait no longer and wrote to UNESCO explaining the position, sending them the manuscript and asking whether they could go ahead and find a publisher even if Khurshid would not give his consent. They decided they could not, and there the matter rests at present. Whether means of publishing it can ever be found remains to be seen.

Most of what I have written on Urdu literature since the publication of *Ghalib, Life and Letters* has been the product of my early (two years early) retirement in 1981. First I produced *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A Select History*, published by Zed in 1992. This began as a collection of articles already published elsewhere since 1969, but all were revised and augmented, and new ones were added. Then in 1995 my selection and translation of Urdu literature c. 1750–1950, *Hidden in the Lute*—a sort of companion volume to *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature* was published simultaneously in Britain (by Carcanet) and in India (by Penguin India). Other things have been the pieces published in *AUS* #10 and this long piece I am writing now, after which I hope to return to translating.

It is pleasant to note that in recent years a very welcome change has taken place in the prospects of publishing translations from Urdu literature. When we wrote *Three Mughal Poets* we had very little hope of finding a publisher for it. But my stand was, If you think it worth writing, write it! The only way you can be sure of not finding a publisher is not to

have anything to submit to one. Nowadays things are different. In the first place publishers (in India especially) have realized that there is a wider market for translation from Urdu than there once was. You have only to look at the recent publications of Oxford University Press, Penguin India, Rupa, and Sterling to see this. And secondly other developments have tended towards the same result. Since the rise of the women's movement and since the emergence of a strong anti-racist movement, respectable publishers are frightened of being seen as in any way conforming to the values of racism or anti-feminism and one of the interesting results of this has been that if you are an Asian woman and you know English well, and you can translate from Urdu, then you stand a very good chance of having your translations accepted for publication here and in the United States, especially if the originals are by women writers. Ismat Chughtai has, deservedly, and Altaf Fatima in my view less deservedly, benefited from this situation.

“A new, major, and unexpected development”

The School of Oriental and African Studies came into existence to service the needs of the servants of the Empire, and its charter reflects this. People like Brough never felt too happy about this aspect of its role, and he used to say that since it was a school of the University of London its university-type functions should take precedence over all others. I never felt any objection to it performing these functions, running degree courses and so on, but I never felt either that it should ignore the needs of those people who—to speak in terms of my own subject—needed Urdu for other than university purposes. Extracts from the relevant part of the charter read

... School ... in which ... research and study may be prosecuted and ... knowledge disseminated by ... courses of study, including courses suitable to the needs of persons about to proceed to the East or Africa for study and research, for the public service or commerce, or for the pursuit of a profession or other calling ...

From the end of the Second World War imperial and commercial needs became less prominent, and in any case people who wanted to acquire the sort of expertise that SOAS was created to supply seemed to have chosen to go elsewhere for it. But from the late sixties onwards there

took place what I have described elsewhere as “a new, major, and unexpected development.”

This was the arrival and settlement in Britain of large numbers of South Asians who spoke Urdu, or at any rate that register of it which is virtually indistinguishable from Hindi. This soon began to produce a demand for Urdu from British people very different from the old pillars of empire and commerce. Among them the most numerous category was that of teachers, especially women teachers in the primary schools, motivated by a very admirable desire to meet the needs of children who entered their schools with little or no knowledge of English, and to be able to communicate with parents whose knowledge of English was very limited. I felt a great admiration for such people, and felt that SOAS ought to have seen it as its duty to provide for their needs. True, most primary school teachers and others wishing to learn Urdu were not “about to proceed to the East,” but in spirit if not in letter, SOAS should have seen itself as obliged to serve their needs. Most of you who are reading this will not be surprised to learn that it didn’t—or, to be more precise, that it made no attempt to take proper stock of this new situation and devise adequate measures to meet it. In this it was not exceptional. Teachers who wanted to learn Urdu were expected to do so at their own expense and in their own time. Local authorities running evening classes, when asked to provide classes in Urdu, generally, in effect, said, “Is there anyone here who can teach Urdu?” and took on anyone who said, “Yes,” without making any effort to assess the prospective teacher’s competence. Not all of these teachers were prepared to take much trouble with their teaching, and those who were generally “taught” Urdu as *they* had been taught it at school, beginning with the Urdu alphabet in full. Not surprisingly, learners whose main wish was to learn to *speak* Urdu, and after several weekly installments of the alphabet were still unable to speak a single word, generally gave up, and the classes folded.

In my time at SOAS there had been occasional demands for Urdu from, e.g., employees of the British Council about to be posted to Pakistan or India, but classes provided had been of the one or two hours a week type—and I never yet met anyone who has been able to learn a language in this way. What was needed was provision of intensive courses of at least a week’s, and preferably a fortnight’s duration, such courses to be available, so far as possible, throughout the year whenever there were sufficient takers to make them viable. I must admit that it took me a long time to reach this conclusion and act upon it, but having done so I worked out how far I thought SOAS could make this sort of provision

without disrupting the teaching of university degree courses. I need not go into any detail here. My proposals were not accepted, but SOAS deserves credit for enabling me to do whatever I could do provided that I personally took responsibility for all that I did and that I simultaneously met all my university teaching responsibilities. For some courses that I ran out of London SOAS Extramural Division paid my travelling expenses. I tried, with rather limited success, to get local authorities in cities where there was a considerable immigrant population to sponsor courses of this kind. I also made it known to personal contacts in such cities that I would be willing to come and teach a week's course to any group of people who wanted me provided that they would pay my return fare from London and give me hospitality for the duration of the course; and this I did in a number of cities and on a number of occasions, helped by the fact that these courses could often be held during the university vacations and the school holidays.

Eventually we scored a major success in Lancashire. Lancashire College, Chorley, ran a whole series of week-long residential courses, paying the fees of myself and other teachers chosen by me, while the Lancashire education authority released school teachers to attend these and paid their fees.

The main outcome of all this was the preparation of my *New Course in Urdu and Spoken Hindi for Learners in Britain*⁵ which SOAS Extramural Division published. This was designed to meet the specific needs of the kind of learners I have described.

It was also designed to show teachers of Urdu how to teach it as a foreign language. Not many were willing to admit to themselves that they needed to acquire any special skill in order to do this effectively, but those who were could learn as they went along by teaching from my course. (In later editions this element was omitted from the course and an excellent teachers' guide written by Alison Shaw with my cooperation was published separately.) The course was completed in four volumes and is perhaps worth describing.

⁵Originally published in 1980–82 under the title *A New Course in Hindustani*. I explained that I had used this term as a name for the 99%-common area between Urdu and Hindi, but many people objected to it, and I therefore re-entitled it when it was reprinted. I chose to have it published by SOAS, knowing that commercial publication would involve selling it at a price which it would be difficult for teachers to afford.

Part I covers all the basic structures of the language, using a limited everyday vocabulary which may equally well be called Urdu and Hindi. (Where spoken Hindi usage differs from that of Urdu, Hindi equivalents are given.) This Part is designed for some 35 to 40 hours of class teaching. The primary emphasis is on imparting fluency in speaking and understanding, and a consistent Roman transcription is used which makes it unnecessary at this stage to learn the Urdu (or the Hindi) script, though Part IV, which teaches the Urdu script (see below) is designed in such a way that those who wish to learn to read and write Urdu at the same time as learning to speak can do so.

Part II, “An outline of grammar and common usage,” and Part III, “Rapid Readings,” are designed to be used together. Part III contains about 12,500 words of material for rapid reading on everyday themes. Almost all of these passages are corrected versions of students’ own writing—in other words they teach learners to say things that learners *want* to be able to say. Each piece is followed by notes and vocabulary, given in the order in which the words occur in the passage, and the aim is to extend considerably the range of vocabulary of the student who has mastered Part I and to familiarize her with the remaining common structures of the language. Part II is a systematic setting out of these structures. The most common of them are illustrated by numerous examples, almost all of which are taken, with cross references, from the passages in Part III.

These two parts should, therefore, normally be used together with Part III as the basic text, and Part II providing back-up.

Part IV, “The Urdu Script.” For those students who can give the necessary time, it is desirable to learn to read and write in parallel with learning to understand and speak the language, and Part IV teaches you to read and write words and sentences in much the same order in which you meet them in Part I. The traditional method of presenting the whole alphabet, set out in alphabetical order, and giving the full range of detached, initial, medial and final forms, has not been followed. You learn the letters as you need them, and in the forms you need at the point at which you first encounter them, until the whole range of letters and forms has been covered; and a systematic statement is then given. You are also given throughout much more detailed guidance on how to *write* the script than other courses provide.

It was this work that gave me the greatest satisfaction over the years from about 1979 to, say, 1986. Part I of the course has now sold a total of 7,672 copies and its widespread use has helped to remedy the appalling situation in the field of provision for Urdu teaching to British adults that

I described earlier.

During these same years I involved myself ever more actively in trying to get provision made for school-age children of Urdu-speaking families—primarily by getting Urdu introduced as a regular subject, and teachers employed to teach it, in as many schools as possible. Where this was achieved it brought other tasks in its train—helping teachers to get the facilities they needed (and were generally denied) in the schools where they taught, helping them to prepare good teaching materials, undertaking the reform of hopelessly outdated school examination syllabuses, and a host of other things. All these fields are too specialized to be gone into here but those who are interested can find a brief account of them in a piece I wrote in 1985 or 1986 called *The Last Four Years of Urdu in Britain*. This was published in pamphlet form along with an Urdu translation by the Pakistan National Language Authority in 1986 and is, I believe, still in print. In any case I felt by about 1985 that I must abandon this work. The realization that I could not give it anything like the attention it needed if I were to continue in my SOAS job led me to decide to take retirement two years before I needed to. I did so with the intention of devoting half my time to this kind of work and the other half to more translations from, and writing about, Urdu literature, but within a few years I found that work for the teaching of Urdu was occupying my whole time, and I decided that I must now leave it to others. Very much less was achieved than was needed—and is still needed—but whatever *was* achieved is, in the Urdu phrase, *ghanimat*—better than nothing.

So since 1986 I have concentrated on writing, with the results I have already described.

Urdu and English Speakers: Future Prospects

The future of Urdu in Pakistan, the future of Urdu in India, and the future of Urdu in the rest of the world are three largely separate fields of study. All three interest me. I have written elsewhere about the prospects for Urdu in India, and shall perhaps one day write about its prospects in Pakistan and also about the valuable work that Urdu speakers in Britain, North America, the Arab countries and elsewhere could be, but aren't, doing, wasting their money instead on giving each other prizes and arranging useless "international" conferences. I was recently invited to one such jamboree in Jeddah—return fare, and all expenses for ten days paid. I replied, declining the invitation but offering, if they would send me the

money equivalent to the cost of my return fare and hospitality, to spend every penny of it on services to Urdu much more valuable than any that would be rendered by my coming to Jeddah. There was (surprise, surprise!) no response to this offer.

Here I want to confine myself to saying something about the field which has engaged my own major attention all my working life and make some assessment of the future of Urdu in English-speaking communities. I use that term because “English-speaking communities” comprise much larger numbers than the population of English-speaking countries—including large numbers of the inhabitants of Urdu’s own homelands.

Those who compile statistics on the numbers of speakers of the languages of the world commonly lump Urdu and Hindi together, tell us how many hundreds of millions speak it, and how this makes it the third (I think they say) most widely-spoken language in the world. (I can’t find the relevant quotation at the moment.) Enthusiasts for Urdu commonly, and dishonestly, quote these figures as applying to Urdu alone, but be that as it may, Urdu is certainly a major world language, and one hopes that one day the contribution of its literature to world culture may be more proportionate to the numbers of its speakers than it is at present. In the last resort the importance of its contribution will depend upon the value of the literature that its speakers produce, upon the extent to which this value becomes known to speakers of other languages, and upon the availability of people competent to translate its literature into these other languages. One can hardly doubt that, e.g., Tolstoy commands the position he does in world literature because many more people have read his work in English, French, German, Spanish and other languages than ever read him in the original Russian. Whether Urdu speakers will ever make a contribution to world culture comparable to that made by the speakers of other major languages will of course depend upon whether they ever come to achieve those conditions of life which would enable them to do so, and one can only hope that they will. Meanwhile they have already produced literature of first class quality, and only a small proportion of this has so far been presented to world audiences.

Very much more still needs to be done. Where English is concerned this requires the production of greater numbers of people who are either completely bilingual—e.g., (as far as I can judge!) Muhammad Umar Memon—or pairs of translators (like Khurshidul Islam and me or Shamsur Rahman Faruqi and Frances Pritchett) both of whom have a good command of both Urdu and English and each of whom has one of

the two languages as his/her mother tongue. I am not belittling the work of others who lack these qualifications. Indian and Pakistani translators from Urdu into English have done valuable work, but the quality of their English is generally not high enough to make it acceptable to most people of English mother tongue. Other translators—the English-knowing products of what in India and Pakistan are generally called “convent schools” have acquired their nearly (but not quite) perfect English at the cost of losing a full command of their mother tongue; so it will long remain important to do whatever *can* be done to swell the numbers of people of English mother tongue who are fully competent in Urdu and of Urdu speakers who are fully competent in English. So far there has not been much sign of English-speakers so attracted to Urdu as to aspire to full competence in it.

In Britain David Matthews and in the USA Frances Pritchett have been the only outstanding examples of such people that I know of, and the translations they have produced in recent years are a welcome addition to a still much too small stock. In the USA Memon is the main example of bilinguals or near-bilinguals who are producing good translations, and the only one personally known to me, while others not personally known to me include Tahira Naqvi, the translator (under the title *The Crooked Line*) of Ismat Chughtai’s *Ṭēr̥hī Lakīr*. In Britain Rukhsana Ahmad is in the same category as these. A potential source of more comprises those small numbers of young people of Urdu-speaking families who have grown up using English as their main language but have come to feel a need to become equally well acquainted with Urdu. (In my last years at SOAS such students came to constitute the largest single category of entrants to Urdu degree courses.) One may also hope that some small proportion of students now at last able to study Urdu in British schools will develop their interest in this direction. Having said all that, it still seems to me that the prospects are not bright. But, as in so many other areas of life, one must do whatever one can do and be content. □

NOTE: Some aspects of Ralph Russell’s work are covered more fully in two articles by Marion Molteno—“Ralph Russell: Teacher, Scholar, Lover of Urdu,” in *AUS* #6, and “‘This new work’: Ralph Russell and Urdu in Britain,” in C. Shackle (ed.) *Urdu and Muslim South Asia. Studies in honour of Ralph Russell*. (SOAS, 1989). [—Eds.]

Appendix

Ralph Russell
Claring x Rd.
9/7/48

A. V. M. S.
Oct. 10 1877.

BAGH O BAHĀR;

CONSISTING OF ENTERTAINING TALES

IN THE

HINDŪSTĀNĪ LANGUAGE,

BY

MIR AMMAN OF DIHLĪ,

ONE OF THE LEARNED NATIVES FORMERLY ATTACHED TO THE COLLEGE OF FORT
WILLIAM, BENGAL.

FOURTH EDITION,

CAREFULLY COMMENTED, AND COLLATED WITH ORIGINAL MSS.,
HAVING THE ESSENTIAL VOWEL POINTS AND PUNCTUATION MARKED THROUGHOUT.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A VOCABULARY OF ALL THE WORDS OCCURRING IN THE WORK.

BY

DUNCAN FORBES, LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF ORIENTAL LANGUAGES IN KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON;
MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND; AND
AUTHOR OF SEVERAL WORKS ON THE HINDŪSTĀNĪ AND PERSIAN LANGUAGES.

جو کوئی اس کو پوہیگا گویا باغ کی سیر کریگا - بلکہ باغ کو آفت
خزان کی بی بی ہی - اور اس کو نہیں - یہ ہمیشہ سرسبز رہیگا *

LONDON :

Wm. H. ALLEN & Co., 13, WATERLOO PLACE, PALL MALL. S.W.

PUBLISHERS TO THE INDIA OFFICE.

1873.

Figures 2a, 2b, and 2c. English and Urdu title pages and a page of text
from the London 1973 edn. of *Bāgh-o-Bahār*

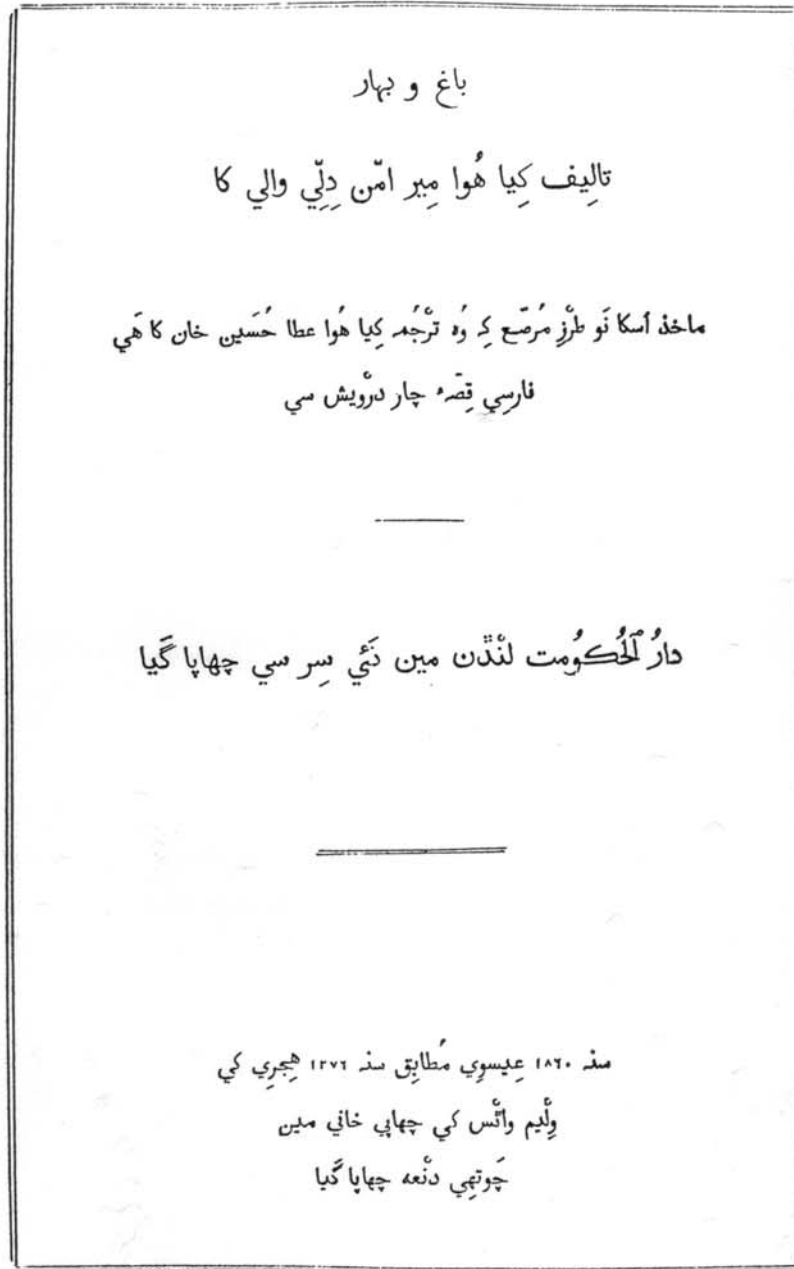


Figure 2b.

سرگذشت آزادبخت بادشاہ کی

۱۱۷

مَدین سُنکر آبدیدہ ہوا اور بولا کہ اے شہزادی! تُوئی واقعی عِشقی کی بڑی
 مَحنت اُتھائی۔ لیکن تسم خُدا کی کہاتا ہوں کہ مَیں اپنی مطلب سی
 درگذرا * اب تیری خاطر جنگل پہاڑ میں پھرونگا۔ اور جو مجھ سی ہوسکیگا
 سو کوزنگا * یہ وعدہ کرکر مَیں اُس جَوان سی رُخصت ہوا۔ اور پانچ برس
 تک سو دائی سا ویرانی میں خالک جھاننا پیرا۔ سُرُغ نہ ملا * آخر اکتا کر ایک
 پہاڑ پر چڑھ گیا اور جاہا کہ اپنی تئیں گرا دُون کہ ہڈی پِسلِی کچھ ثابت
 نہ رہی۔ وہی سوار برقعہ پوش آہنچا۔ اور بولا کہ اپنی جان مت کہو۔ تھوڑی
 دنوں کی بعد تُو اپنی مقصد سی کامیاب ہوگا * یا سائین اللہ! تمہاری دیدار
 تو میسر ہوئی۔ اب خُدا کی فضل سی امیدوار ہوں کہ خوشی اور خرمی حاصل
 ہو۔ اور سب نامراد اپنی مراد کو پہنچیں *

سرگذشت آزادبخت پادشاہ کی

جب دوسرا درویش بھی اپنی سیر کا قصہ کہہ چکا۔ رات آخر ہو گئی۔
 اور وقت صبح کا شروع ہوئی پر آیا * پادشاہ آزادبخت چپکا اپنی دولتخانی
 کی، اب روانہ ہوا۔ محل میں پہنچ کر نماز ادا کی * پھر غسل خانی میں
 نا خلعہ سے فاخرہ بہن کر دیوان عام میں تخت پر نکل بیٹھا۔ اور حکم کیا۔
 بسا، جاوی۔ ا۔ فقیر فلانی مکان پر وارد ہین۔ اُن کو بعزت اپنی ساتھ
 - نوسر میں لی آوی * بموجب حکم کی چوہدار وہاں گیا۔ دیکھا۔ تو چاروں
 بی نوا جہازا جھٹکا پیر۔ ہاتھ منہ دھو کر۔ چاہتی ہین کہ سا کریں اور اپنی

Figure 2c.

نظم منتخب

NAZM-I-MUNTAKHAB.

BEING SELECTIONS FROM THE POETS
FOR THE

DEGREE OF HONOUR EXAMINATION
IN URDU.

COMPILED AND ARRANGED BY

SHAMS-UL-ULAMA MAULAVI MUHAMMAD YUSUF JAFARI,
CHIEF MAULAVI, BOARD OF EXAMINERS,

AND

MAULAVI SAIYID ALI SAJJAD,
SOME TIME ACTING CHIEF MAULAVI, BOARD OF EXAMINERS.

UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF

CAPTAIN C. L. PEART,
Offg. Secretary, Board of Examiners.

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY.

CALCUTTA :

PRINTED AT THE BAPTIST MISSION PRESS.

1909.

Figures 3a and 3b. Title page of *Nazm-i-Muntakhab* and a page of text giving Akbar's *rubā'is* and a *qit'ā*.

(۱۵۴)

رباعی

ہماری ہے زبان خوش بیانی کیلئے اُنہاے قلم گہر نشانی کیلئے
آیا ہوں میں کوچہ سخن میں اکبر نظارا شاہد معانی کیلئے

قطعہ

تاکید وضع ملت و دیں کی کورتکا میں اہل زمانہ لاکہ ہنسیں مجھہ غریب پر
ہوتا نہیں طبیب مدوا سے دستکش سچے اجل تو ہنستی ہے سعی طبیب پر

رباعی

جب لطف و کرم سے پیش آئے محبوب اگلے رنجوں کو بہول جانا اچھا
جب مڈل نسیم وہ گلے سے لگ جائے مانند کلی کے بہول جانا اچھا

رباعی

کیا تم سے کہیں جہاں کو کیسا پایا غفلت ہی میں آدمی کو ڈوبا پایا
آنکھیں تو بیشمار دیکھیں - لیکن کم تھیں بخدا کہ جفکو بینا پایا

رباعی

غفلت کی ہنسی سے آہ بہرنا اچھا افعال مضر سے کچھہ نکرنا اچھا
اکبر نے سنا ہے اہل غیرت سے یہی جینا ذلت سے ہو تو مرنا اچھا

رباعی

رشوت ہے گلے نیکنامی کا چھرا عیاشی ہے بدی کے پہلے کا دھرا
ہرجند کہ بے محل خوشامد ہے بری گستاخ مگر خوشامدی سے بھی برا

رباعی

آزاد سے دیس کا گرفتار اچھا شرمندہ ہو دل میں وہ گنہگار اچھا
ہرجند کہ زور بھی ہے اک خصلت بد واللہ کہ بیچیا سے مکار اچھا

رباعی

مذہب کو لیا تو بھٹ میں سوٹوٹا چاہی اصلاح تو خدا ہی جھوٹا
شکوہ ہم غیر کا کریں کیا اکبر قسمت ہی نے ہم کو ہو طرح سے لوٹا

Figure 3b.

Account of Badr-i Munir and Banajir's Falling in Love.

O Saqi, give me to drink the sweet wine before me,
 Showing me first that full moon One (bringer).
 Brightest light of her, the heart has been joy,
 And my eye serve me far and near.
 I'll give an account of the cure of that passion
 For account of the bezel follows after that of the ^{shell} ring.
 That couch which was a wave of the sea of beauty,
 There appeared a throne-adorned of beauty.
 Her years numbered about fifteen,
 She was extremely handsome and lovely.
 With one elbow gracefully placed on a ^{cushion} pillow,
 By the head of the waterway she ^{dearly} sat.
 The female attendants all stood about,
 Like a cluster of stars by the moon.
 She was sitting in this attitude
 With her mind devoted to the moonlight.
 On one hand, the moon was shining in the sky,
 On the other, this full-moon One ^{was} on the earth.
 When the image of both fell on the waterway,
 The ^{ripples} waves began to roll on the waves.
 When once ^{sovereign} this image affected ^{the} ^{many} ^{moons} ^{appearance} ^{the} ^{universe}
 It is taken for lucky ^{for} ^{the} ^{people} ^{there}. The age is taken for lucky then
 A wonderful beauty it was soul-inspiring,
 Compared with it the moon was lumpy.
 How can I describe her gown -
 Well, it was a gown of very fine muslin.
 Every fringe had so many pearls
 You might say she ^{was} ^{being} ^{weighed} ^{against} ^{pearls}.

Figure 4. A page of A.H. Harley's MS literal translation of Mir Hasan's *Sihru 'l-Bayān*.

میرے نزدیک سچے مسلمان کو پہچاننے کا ایک ہی معتبر طریقہ ہے
 اور وہ یہ ہے کہ آپ برابر دیکھتے رہیں کہ وہ دوسرے انسانوں
 کے ساتھ کس قسم کا سلوک کرتا ہے۔ اسلام کی اصطلاح میں
 کئی قسم کے حقوق ہیں۔ ان میں سے دو حقوق حقوق اللہ
 (خدا کے حقوق) اور حقوق العباد (بندوں کے حقوق) ہیں۔
 خدا کے حقوق میں نماز، روزہ، حج وغیرہ شامل ہیں۔
 لیکن آپ صرف اس صورت میں وہ حقوق ادا کرتے ہیں اگر آپ کے
 دل میں سوائے خدا کے عشق اور خدا کی عبادت سے اور
 کوئی جذبہ موجود نہیں۔ اور آپ کے دل کا حال یا آپ جانیں
 یا خدا جانے۔ کوئی اور نہیں جان سکتا۔
 دوسری طرف حقوق العباد کی صورت یہ ہے کہ معمولی سے
 تجربے کے بعد آپ فوراً دیکھ سکتے ہیں کہ کون آدمی یہ حقوق ادا
 کر رہا ہے اور کون نہیں کر رہا۔ اور چونکہ حقوق العباد کا ادا
 کرنا ہر مسلمان پر اسی طرح فرض ہے جس طرح حقوق اللہ کا ادا

Figures 5a and 5b. Extract from Ralph Russell's letter to Urdu newspaper *Jang* (London), dated 12 January 1981, Urdu handwriting.

کرنا اس لئے سچے مسلمان کی پہچان اس میں ہے کہ وہ دوسرے
انسانوں کے حقوق جن میں مسلمان، عیسائی، یہودی، ہندو، سکھ
ملحد سب ہی شامل ہیں ادا کرتا ہے، یعنی دوسرے انسانوں کے
ساتھ وہی سلوک کرتا ہے جس کی وہ ان سے توقع کرتا ہے۔ آپ
صرف اسی قسم کے مسلمان کے بارے میں معتبر اندازہ کر سکتے ہیں
کہ وہ خدا کے بھی حقوق ادا کرتا ہوگا۔۔۔

اور یہی وجہ ہے کہ میرے نزدیک اردو شاعری میں جس اسلام
کا تصور کا پروردگار اظہار پایا جاتا ہے وہ بالکل صحیح ہے۔ اور
یہ تصور مجھے اس لئے بے حد پسند ہے کہ ہر اچھا انسان، چاہے اس
کا مذہب اسلام ہو یا کوئی اور بلکہ چاہے ملحد ہی ہو، یہ تصور
قبول کر سکتا ہے اور ہر اچھے انسان کو اسے قبول کرنا ہی چاہئے۔

Figure 5b.