

This Issue of the *Annual*

READERS OF THE ANNUAL will notice, with some disappointment no doubt, that the issue in their hands is devoted in its entirety to the writings of a single author—Naiyer Masud. This certainly was not our initial plan. Until two weeks before we went to press, we were certain that the 1997 issue would be formally no different than any of our previous ones. However, it soon became apparent that the material on Naiyer Masud together with our regular fare would far exceed the limit of 400 pages which financial considerations and technical logistics have more or less forced upon us. To withhold some of the material on Naiyer Masud to make room for other regular items would have resulted in greater disappointment for some of the contributors who had selflessly given us of their time, effort and good-will. We decided—with some contrition, a measure of regret, and tons of trepidation—to publish the balance of the material collected on Naiyer Masud in an entire issue of the *Annual*. So here we are ...

But disappointment is tempered by the ultimate value of what has come to be. Certain phenomena erupt into existence with an inexorable force. Acceptance is the better part of wisdom. We take comfort in the fact that we and our readers have been here a witness to a stunning efflorescence. It will have broken anyway. Why not in *our* garden! Naiyer Masud has emerged in the last ten years as a major short story writer, worthy of every consideration and critical attention. This is so far the most comprehensive presentation of his creative world in any language, Urdu included.

Well, here is a deal: Since most of the other material too is ready, we shall see to it that our readers don't have to wait long for it. So expect to receive the next issue of the *Annual* early in 1998, as early as February. It will be sizable and wide-ranging in its coverage. And that's a promise.

The current issue is dedicated to the memory of Mahmood Ayaz,

who passed away in his native Bangalore on 29 March this year. A poet and a man of high critical sensibility and unusually refined literary sense, he did much to advance the cause of Urdu creative and critical writing in the Subcontinent. Through *Saughāt*, a literary journal which he founded in late '50s, he provided a vibrant forum for debate on literary issues. His enduring passions helped identify the authentic in the old and the viable in the new Urdu writing, but more importantly he prepared a nurturing environment for younger writers through constructive and forthright criticism. He will be sorely missed for his straight talk which betrayed his deeper concern for the writer. Coincidentally, he was both an admirer and astute reader of Naiyer Masud, to whose work he devoted an entire section of his *Saughāt*.

Two happy items that I'd like to share with our readers:

First, the Khwaja Ashkar Husain Memorial Award for 1997 was given to the *Annual of Urdu Studies*, "For Distinguished Services to Urdu Language and Literature." The award, which included a handsome plaque and generous cash prize, was presented in a special ceremony in Toronto last March.

The award commemorates the memory of Khwaja Ashkar Husain, who was a poet, thinker, educationist and journalist. But his single most enduring achievement consisted of setting up colleges and advancing the cause of education in Pakistan. He studied Philosophy and Psychology at Aligarh Muslim University and later contributed his ardent efforts to the movement for Pakistan. He passed away in 1984.

On behalf of the editors and the readers of the *Annual*, I record here our profound gratitude to the Award Committee.

Second, Griffith A. Chaussée, Associate Editor of the *Annual*, has joined the faculty of the University of Virginia at Charlottesville with the present academic year. He will be teaching Hindi and Urdu. Congratulations, Griff, and may you prosper in your new career! □

M.U.M.