

This Issue of the *Annual*

APPARENTLY THE IDEA OF AN ENTIRE ISSUE devoted to a single writer didn't sit well with some of our readers. That their patience would be exhausted so soon came as something of a surprise, also as a palpable reminder of how innovation must be sometimes tempered by regard for public preference. Indeed it was an anomaly, but one we thought necessary. So for those of our readers who felt the need to return the last issue of the *AUS* (“*Hamārē bhī haiñ mihrbāñ kaisē kaisē!*”), with or without accompanying notes of disappointment, we can do no better than promise more variegated fare in the future.

The size and range of topics covered in the present issue will hopefully make up for some of the disappointment which the relatively limited scope of the previous issue may have caused. We print, with a sense of deep satisfaction and pride, the closely argued article of Shamsur Rahman Faruqi on an exceedingly important subject, but one which has been generally ignored by the balance of Urdu scholars, whether native or foreign. “Why is it,” he asks, “that sometime in the early nineteenth century, users of (Indian) Persian, and Urdu, lost their self-confidence and began to privilege all Indo-Iranian Persian writers against the other two, and all kinds of Persian and Arabic against Urdu?” He examines, with professional detachment and clinical precision, the attitude of Indian Persian and Urdu literati in the pre-Colonial period and finds a refreshingly different reality.

Ralph Russell has again given us a few pieces, among them the opening pages of a book of reminiscences he has started writing in Urdu. His reminiscences will focus on books, personalities, and events that he has found interesting and memorable in his nearly 55-year-long career as a scholar of Urdu. It is hoped that the future issues of the *AUS* will each include an installment of this work.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Raza Ali Abidi and

Syed Muhammad Ashraf who obliged me with their unpublished work for the Urdu section of the current issue.

Readers might wonder about the inclusion of the short story “Glassy Dock.” Didn’t we already publish it in the last issue as “Sheesha Ghat”? Indeed we did. In justification we can say that Elizabeth Bell, much impressed by this story, wanted to own it in some deeper way at a personal level, by transporting it into an idiom and setting more familiar to her. Which, by the way, is the greatest compliment one writer can pay to a fellow-writer from across another language. In any event, the decision to include it was entirely mine. But in order to contextualize the whole exercise for our readers, I asked her to give us a brief account of why she did what she did. Her reasons follow the story.

Sagaree Sengupta had wanted to finish her article on Naiyer Masud and finalize the translation of her interview with him in time for the last issue. But it couldn’t be. We are glad to include both in the present issue.

A correction is in order: Readers please note that the title of Naiyer Masud’s short story given as “Sultan Muzaffar’s Imperial Chronicler” in the last issue should be: “Sultan Muzaffar’s Chronicler of Events.” □

M.U.M.