

This Issue of the *Annual*

THE past twelve months have brought much to lament and much to applaud in the world of Urdu letters. An unusually large number of Urdu writers left us during this period. Among the incalculable losses were Hayatullah Ansari (died 26 January) and Begum Hijab Imtiaz Ali (died 18 March), two of Urdu's pioneering fiction writers. But this period has also been singularly fruitful. It saw the long-awaited publication in English of two of Urdu's most talked-about, most controversial and most celebrated novels, written only a few year's apart, Qurratulain Hyder's *Āg kā Daryā* (1959) and Abdullah Hussein's *Udās Naslēn* (1963), both translated by their respective authors. For our own part, we received an unusually large number of quality submissions to the *AUS*. The influx was so rich and copious that we couldn't possibly have published them all in a single volume, and to put some of them off for a whole year, though feasible, would have been unconscionable. To resolve the pleasurable dilemma we have decided to move ahead the publication of our 2000 issue. It should come out some time in June this year.

Many South Asian readers interested in subscribing to the *AUS* have found the price far too high by South Asian standards. We agree. Now we are pleased to report that Oxford University Press, Karachi, has agreed to bring out, starting with this issue, an edition of the *AUS* meant for the countries of South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Far East, and Middle East at what this editor assumes—and fervently hopes—will be an affordable price. Our deepest thanks to Amina Syed, Daleara Jamasji-Hirjikaka, and Yasmin Qureshi of OUP, who all worked very hard indeed to make this happen.

As always, a number of people contributed generously of their time and energy to make this year's issue possible. Musharraf Farooqi, whose creative energy is matched only by his desire to oblige, undertook to translate a large number of Afzal Ahmed Syed's poems at my request. And this is only a part of the invaluable assistance he has rendered to the *AUS* this year. His other project for us, which will appear in the next issue, is an annotated translation of the first

hundred pages of *Dāstān-e Amīr Ḥamza*, with an introductory essay on the piece. He has promised to give us a yearly installment until the book is completely translated. This is happy news indeed. The critical study of the *dāstān* is only beginning to attract scholarly attention. His work couldn't have come at a better time, and I thank him for his dedication and industry.

I'm also grateful to Anis Memon, who translated from the Italian Daniela Bredi's "Remarks on *Ara'ish-e Mahfil* by Mir Sher 'Ali Afsos," and to Elizabeth Bell, who provided editorial assistance for this issue and translated Alain Désoulières's article "A Study of Kamal Ahmad Rizvi's Urdu TV Drama *Alif Nun*," which he wrote for us in French.

Lastly, Griffith Chaussée, who has ably assisted me with the editorial and technical aspects of the *AUS* since its move to Madison in 1993, finds his professional obligations at the University of Virginia far too demanding to continue his assistance. Many thanks to you, Griff, for your inestimable contribution to the *AUS* over the years. □

M.U.M.