

## EDITORIAL

It gives immense pleasure to bring to you the peer reviewed, bilingual, UGC-CARE approved, *Urdu Studies* 4. Urdu studies in India is fast become an expanding, and rich domain for literary, cultural, theoretical and intellectual enquiry. It is at times, with amusement, and at times with consternation that I recall that when I first began my studies in this area, about fifteen or more years ago, mine was invariably, the only paper published in a journal or the only one presented at a conference that gave a peek into the amazing realm of Urdu literature. I recall also, that I consciously decided to read and comment on Urdu texts that had or hadn't been translated, above all, for the love of the language and its literature, and, I reasoned to myself, what more or what new could I discover in texts or subjects that were taken up for study every now and again by a great many very accomplished scholars. I must say that I have thoroughly enjoyed these years of enquiry and exploration and learnt a lot as well. I am filled with a sense of huge satisfaction that more and more; particularly young and dynamic and enthusiastic scholars are now taking up reading and researching Urdu texts.

Most mainstream school curricula in our country do not include Urdu language and literature studies, while college and university curricula do, and this is perhaps the chief reason behind the decline of academic interest in Urdu. However, in spite of this lack, times are changing and the Urdu language and its literature now not only command interest but are also emerging as dynamic and engaging areas of research and enquiry. Translation has no doubt played a significant role in this growing interest in Urdu. As more and more Urdu texts are translated into English, more and more readers become interested in the literature, culture, aesthetics and the many genres that are available in the original

language. I also feel that the website *Rekhta*, which makes it possible to access nearly every piece of available literature in the language in nastālīq, devnāgrī and roman scripts, has played a vital role in kindling interest, across generations, in Urdu poetry and prose. Having said this, one must also concede that the orality of Hindi-Urdu cinema, songs in particular, have contributed considerably in ensuring that the language remains a part of our day to day parlance and we relish the sweetness of its gentle cadences. Translation, which is in fact, a centuries old activity, and the path-breaking *Rekhta* which is a very contemporary enterprise, along with Hindi-Urdu cinema go a long way in helping open up more and more possibilities of research in the area of Urdu studies. This translates into the possibility that Urdu and Urdu studies can look forward to brighter and grander futures in the land where the language emerged, flourished, pinnacled and then, metaphorically speaking, ‘fell from grace’ – for no fault of its own.

*Urdu Studies 4* comprises fourteen pieces – twelve academic essays, one translated story and one translated essay. The journal carries two memorial essays dedicated to two stalwarts who served Urdu with much dedication and perseverance. On 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2022, Urdu literature lost one of its most accomplished critics, Gopi Chand Narang. This edition pays homage to him by means of an essay by Shafey Kidwai, discussing his keen understanding of Urdu language and literature by reading some of his published texts. Marcia Hermansen honours Dr. Abidullah Ghazi, who passed away in 2021. Dr. Ghazi made significant contributions to both Urdu prose and poetry and founded IQRA International Foundation in 1983, in Chicago, to develop a curriculum for Muslim children being educated in fulltime or weekend Islamic schools.

Soheb Niazi conducts an in-depth study of various historical writings coming out of *qasbah* Amroha from 1878 to 1934, a period that saw a flourishing tradition of local histories by local writers. Family history, history of genealogy and lineages, social history, and *qaumī tārikh* or community histories are under his purview. Niazi discusses the relevance of these local histories that serve as records of familial, social and economic life in Amroha and can simultaneously serve as a rich resource for developing micro histories of specific individuals, families and communities. Nimish Sharma’s essay on Ma’ni Āfrini and translatability of the Urdu ghazal discusses the near impossibility of translating the richly stratified and layered nuances of Urdu ghazals. He reads English language translation by poets in Aijaz Ahmad’s edited text on the ghazals of Ghalib, and elucidates that Ahmad circumscribes meaning through his editorial inputs. He also reads Sarvat Rahman’s and Frances Pritchett and Cornwall Owen’s translations of Ghalib. Saifuddin Ahmad’s essay on the

eighteenth century polymath Sirajuddin Ali Khan-i Arzu is an extensive and thorough reading the immense contribution of this great poet, scholar, linguist, lexicographer, grammarian, and commentator to Persian and Urdu languages and literatures. Pranay Sood reads how the desire for *sharafat* leads the offspring of the erstwhile courtesan Mehboob Jan in Iqbaal Majeed's novel *Namak* to attempt erasing her past and reconstructing a new and desirable one that suits their contemporary social and professional status. Sood discusses how memory and past narratives play important roles in keeping the truth alive.

Shuby Abidi examines AJOKA Theatre activism by means of Shahid Nadeem's "Dekh Tamāsha Chaltā Ban" a play set against the Pakistani political scenario during General Zai-ul Haq's military dictatorship. She also discusses how ingeniously Nadeem employs the stage to convey the relevance of turning a deaf ear or a blind eye to injustice and/or facing the consequences of speaking up. Anab Naiyer reads some of the popular Unāni medical magazines to examine how aspects of health, medicine and well-being are covered in them. Her essay illustrates how the magazines were meant to serve twin purposes of providing health advisories and marketing medicinal products advertised in them. Tabinda Sadiq's essay on Rashid Jahan discusses her stories from Marxist and feminist points of view. It showcases how Jahan used her writing to crusade against marginalization of women, backward communities and the poor. Employing the mirror as metaphor, Siddique Khan's essay reads Shamoil Ahmad's "Singārdān" or "The dressing Table" against Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's reading of the snow white fairy tale in the introduction to *The Madwoman in the Attic*. He discusses how guilt leads the central protagonist first to anxiety, then, to paranoia. He also displays how the mirror figures in Urdu poetry. Raghiful Haque and Gazala Khan examine Bano Qudsia's *Rājā Giddh* against Freudian analysis, Islamic faith and culture. With *rizq-e haram* as the pivotal idea, their essay provides insights on Qudsia's treatment of love and madness through her foregrounding complicated love stories in contemporary times. M. Faizan Moquim reads how dysfunctional familial environments can breed dysfunctional childhoods and consequently dysfunctional adulthoods that are continually haunted by past memories, in Khalid Jawed's *Naimat khānā* or *The Paradise of Food*.

In the translations section, Fahad Hashmi's translation of Anjum Manpuri's dialogic narrative "Mīr Kallu ki Gawāhī" is a humorous piece on the relevance of wit and presence of mind when giving testimony in a court of law. I contributed my translation of "Jāre kī Chāndnī," Qurratulain Hyder's review of Ghulam Abbas' literary style in the

anthology because I believe literary scholarship in Urdu must be made available for the non-Urdu reader.

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Arshad Masood Hashmi for performing a great service to Urdu literature and language by bringing out *Urdu Studies* with immense dedication and for giving me the opportunity to make my contribution towards this service by collating and editing the essays that make the English language section of this volume. I also appreciate very much, the freedom he gave me to select the essays. I must put on record that this has been a very gratifying experience. I would like to express a warm thank you to all our contributors for their contributions; their ready responses to all my comments and queries and their patience through the entire editorial process. Truly, this edition would not have been possible without their contributions.

I do hope you will enjoy reading all these interesting pieces. With best wishes for the journal to grow from strength to strength!

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