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Editorial

Fatima Rizvi

We bring you Issue 1 Volume 6 of *Urdu Studies* with mixed feelings – happiness, because we are tabling another issue of the journal, comprising critical essays, translations and book reviews – and sadness, because Urdu literature has lost three notable icons – writer and activist Jeelani Bano who passed on in Hyderabad the month of April, poet and academic Bashir Badr, who passed away in Bhopal, in May, and Hasan Manzar, psychiatrist and prolific writer who passed away in Karachi, in September, as we were preparing this volume for its online release. The Urdu literary world is the poorer in their absence. They will be missed sorely by their readership and *Urdu Studies* hopes the academia will enable them live robust afterlives – for no writer or poet can be served and celebrated better than by being read abundantly, being translated and being taken up for critical study. This volume carries obituaries on these three literary stalwarts and is dedicated to their memory.

This issue brings you a variety of critical studies. The first, **“Tracing the Inscription of Identity Through the *Tazkira* Tradition in Muslim South Asia”** by **Marcia Hermansen** reflects on broad themes of memory, identity, and place running through the South Asian *tazkira* tradition ranging from pre-modern Persian examples to contemporary Urdu works, with a focus on Sufi works of memorialization. **Ajit Pradhan’s “The Wingless Ascent: The Sinai Critique in Urdu Poetry”** is a detailed study of a single, sustained argument across centuries of Urdu and Persian poetry – that the experience of Moses on mount Sinai was never the final word on the human encounter with the Absolute. The essay follows this argument by carrying out critical and philosophical analyses of several Perso-Urdu and Urdu poets including Amir Khusrau, Bedil, Ghalib, Jigar Moradabadi, Shirwaniya, Behzad Lucknavi, Jalal Lucknavi Rashk and Dard, to mention a few. The study

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concludes that the utterance of Moses was not a desperate plea from the foot of a burning mountain, but a quiet gesture of recognition between two, who were never truly separate. **Mehr Afshan Farooqi's "Whirlwind of the Heart: The Ġhazal: Tīr, Dil, Jigar"** is autobiographical in nature. Employing three stock metaphors of Urdu poetry over centuries of poetic compositions, and interweaving the writer's personal experiences with cardiac disorder, it traces her quest and location of Ghalib's *dīvān*. She concludes: "A memorable pleasure came from encountering the unique pages of Ghalib's earliest *dīvān*, the *Dīvān* of 1816, which had been inscribed in the young poet's own hand. The manuscript is remarkable with its handmade paper, *shikastah* calligraphy, artistic layout, and the poignancy of Ghalib's handwritten notes scribbled in the margins and in the back." **"Challenges in Translating Faiz Ahmad Faiz into English: A Comparative Study of Agha Shahid Ali and Shiv K. Kumar"** by **Shabeer Ahmad Shah** offers an examination of the challenges involved in translating the poetry of Faiz Ahmed Faiz into English through a study of Agha Shahid Ali's and Shiv K. Kumar's translations, through a close comparative analysis of select poems. The study explores each translator's negotiations of linguistic, cultural and ideological elements embedded in Faiz's poetry. It explores differences in translation strategies. Drawing on translation theories with linguistic and cultural orientations, domestication and foreignization, the study argues that each translator constructs a distinct version of Faiz, thereby reshaping his poetic voice for different readerships. **"Postcolonial Resistance and Cultural Hybridity in Modern Urdū Literature: A Study of Selected Works by Sa'ādat Ḥasan Maṇṭo and Paighām Āfāqī"** Arifur Rahaman Mollah delves deeply into the themes of postcolonial resistance and cultural hybridity through the selected works of two pivotal figures: Sa'ādat Ḥasan Maṇṭo (1912–1955) and Paighām Āfāqī (1956–2016). Employing Homi K. Bhabha's seminal concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and the "third space of enunciation," Edward Said's critique of Orientalism, and Frantz Fanon's explorations of colonial violence and decolonization, the study illustrates how these writers actively contest colonial legacies, communal fractures, bureaucratic absurdities, and neocolonial structures.

The translations section includes ten contributions. The first, **Shama Askari's *Epidemic. A Novella***, is a translation of Hasan Manzar's *Wabā*, which precedes the Covid 19 pandemic by several years. Written with great compassion, sans rancor, the novella makes its readers laugh and cry at one and the same time. Manzar brings to this novella, his vast

experience of working in government hospitals at home and abroad. *Wabā* is a masterpiece, relevant even today, as large-scale medical emergencies seemed to have changed nothing. **“The Story of Dalla,”** **Medhavi Gupta’s** translation of the anonymous *Qiṣṣa-e Aurat Dallah* belongs to the genre of *qiṣṣas* featuring trickster women. The story follows the life and trickeries of Dalla who moves from city to city, duping unsuspecting people of the wealth and belongings. Intelligent and adept at her art, she is never caught, or, when she is, she stage-manages her own escape with utmost alacrity. The *qiṣṣa* is set during the reign of Caliph Harun Rashid of the Abbasid dynasty. **Sami Rafiq** translates select poems from Rashid Anwar Rashid’s *Gīt Sunatī hai Havā*. Written in response to the contemporary times when the world is faced with environmental crises, Rashid’s poems are meant to generate environmental awareness for his Urdu readership. They talk of the loss of biodiversity owing to the unethical means by which forests are chopped down and rivers are abused. The poet writes about calamitous climate change and the suffering of the non-human around him. By way of introduction to Rashid Anwar Rashid, Rafiq translates Safdar Imam Quadri’s essay “Rāshid Anwar Rāshid kā Shā’irānah Ijtihād” as **“The Poetic strivings of Rashid Anwar Rashid.”** The essay details Rashid’s poetic craft.

The four translations below were submitted for the 2025 edition of the Jawad Memorial Prize for Urdu-English translation. *Urdu Studies* presents edited versions of these entries. The translators have provided commentaries or introductions to their translations. Abul Kalam Azad’s “Ik Mis Sīmīñ Badan se kar Liyā Landan Meñ Aqd,” published in *Al-Hilal* sometime between 1912 and 1914 is collaboratively translated with commentary over here as **“Marrying a Fair-Skinned Miss in London”** by **Ahmad Aqeel Sarwar & Claire Chambers**. They write that it is a piece whose concerns with intimacy, cultural crossing, and the pressures exerted on marriage emerge vividly through dialogue and disagreement. They add that the essay’s title and argument also place it in dialogue with Akbar Allahabadi’s poetry which famously mocked Westernised self-fashioning and the cultural dilemmas of colonial modernity. His 1909 poem “Mis Sīmīñ Badan” from which Azad’s essay very likely borrows its title and subject, and which appears at the end of his essay, is also translated here for the Anglophone reader. **Arif Ansari** translates a chapter “Chauthī Rāt: Dekh ākar kūchah chāk girebāñ kī bahār” from Sardar Jafri’s *Lakhnaū kī Pāñch Rāteñ* as **“The Fourth Night” “Come See the Spring in the Alley of the Lover with Tattered Clothes.”** This is an account of the December 1941 mushā’arah at the All-India Radio’s

Lucknow station, which attracted a number of young poets professing alignment with the Progressive Writers' Movement. Presided over by Josh Malihabadi, participating poets included Majaz, Faiz, Jazbi, Muhiuddin, and Jafri. In the audience were Lucknow's literati, Sajjad Zaheer, his wife Razia, Maya Sarkar, D P Mukerji, Ahmed Ali, Gauhar Sultan, Hayatullah Ansari, Anwar Jamal Kidwai, and Syed Sibte Hassan. The essay is a relevant eye-witness account of the event. **Maaz Bin Bilal** translates three short essays from Hasrat Mohani's *Qaid-e-Farang* or *The Foreigner's/British Imprisonment*, first published as an essay series, *Mushāhidāt-e Zindān* or *Witness Accounts/Observations of the Prison* in Mohani's magazine *Urdu-e Mu'alla*. Translated for the first time, Bilal reasons that it is relevant to look back as these essays covering an important chapter in India's colonial history, in the present times, particularly as they underscore the high-handedness and the arbitrariness of the colonial government. The essays accentuate the writer's composure as he lives through his incarceration, under austere vigilance and extreme hardship. **Shaiq Ali** translates Sa'adat Hasan Manto's "Kisān Mazdūr Sarmāyadār, Zamiñdār" as "**Peasant, Laborer, Capitalist, Landowner.**" He writes in his introduction to the piece: "... very likely translated by Manto from the socialist materials circulating in India in the wake of the Russian Revolution (1917)—which survived in Indian literature and films well into the 1970s—(this essay) is an example of his early commitment to socially instrumental writing that was informed very much by left-leaning thought.

Fahad Hashmi's translation of Ilyas Ahmad Gaddi "Tom Jefarsan ke Pinjray" as "**Tom Jefferson's Cages**" is a story about a war veteran who prefers living peacefully in Ranchi in India over living in his own, mechanized country, England. Old and wizened, his remains surrounded by small, caged animals and birds in his little house making it a veritable zoo for the village dwellers. However, he soon realizes that the peace he was looking for, is breached by separatist violence. **Tousif Raza** translates select poems from *Mann men jamī barf* by Shabnam Ashai. Commenting of her poems, he writes: "The world of these poems is woven from deceptively simple images: a pheran, a courtyard, a broken forehead, a snowfall, a deserted road, a curfew-stricken city, an empty swing, an airport trolley, a fading fragrance, a dream half-remembered. Yet these are never merely objects or scenes. They become metaphors for inner landscapes, repositories of memory, and symbols through which the poet negotiates the complex relationship between self and world." **Mushtaq B Barq** also translates select poems composed by Shabnam Ashai from the anthologies *Mann men jamī barf* and *Katharsis*.

In his introduction to the translations, he writes: “The impressive collection of nazms of Dr. Shabnam Ashai is an extraordinary amalgamation of pure perceptions and experience. The distinctive style she has opted for perfectly fits this priestly class of sentimental poetry.”

The section carrying review articles and book reviews includes three contributions. Ali Haider’s “A Lament with a Hole at its Centre: Naming and the *Shahr-āshob* in Zaki Naqvi’s *Diyār-o Dasht* (دیاردشت, Abodes and Wilderness)” is a detailed review article of Zaki Naqvi’s debut collection of Urdu short fiction, *Diyār-o-Dasht* (2025). The stories are set in a district on the border of Saraiki and Punjabi that, in Naqvi’s words, no language and no political group has taken up. The essay argues that the book is an anatomy of a place where names that carry authority are issued by power and those that tell the truth are unofficial. Naqvi subtitles his longest story a *shahr-āshob*, borrowing the classical Urdu lament for ruined cities, a genre built around a named centre, for a village whose official name nobody uses. Reading the collection against several critical studies on Pakistani fiction, the essay traces a catalogue of names taken, issued and given, and a view of war from the ranks. Asim Siddiqui’s review “From Retelling to Translation: *Umrāo Jān Adā* as *Khwab Sarab* and *Dream Mirage*” is a detailed study of Arif Ansari’s translation of Anis Ashfaq’s sequel to Mirza Mohammad Hadi Ruswa’s novel. The article traces Ashfaq’s attempt at the preservation of Lakhnavi adab *vis-à-vis* – lifestyle, literature and culture. Siddiqui concludes that as a retelling *Umrao Jān Adā*, *Khwāb Sarāb* familiarizes a contemporary reader with the history of Lucknow’s well-known and forgotten landmarks as well as its cultural and literary practices, adding that Ansari’s translation forms an important link between these two novels. Syed Imtiaz Hasnain reviews Syed Sarwar Hussain’s *A Leaf Unturned*, a translation of Justice Shamim Saifi’s *Ek Waraq*. He concludes that “*A Leaf Unturned* is a deeply affecting and intellectually stimulating anthology that offers a rare glimpse into the philosophical and emotional landscape of a significant Urdu writer. Through its exploration of themes such as desire, identity, alienation, and the search for meaning, it speaks to concerns that are both culturally specific and universally resonant.”

I appreciate Professor A.M. Hashmi’s dedicated engagement with bringing out this issue of *Urdu Studies*. I would like to put on record, my appreciation for Annie Zaidi who put me in touch with four contestants aspiring for the Ali Jawad Zaidi Memorial Prize for Urdu-English translation. I must thank all the contributors for their contributions, their responses to the reviewers’ and the editorial comments and queries, and

their patience through the entire editorial process. I hope the research papers and the translations included here will encourage more engagement with Urdu literature, and spawn more scholarship on or around it.

Fatima Rizvi

Professor, Department of English and Modern
European Languages,
University of Lucknow,
Lucknow,
Uttar Pradesh, India.
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