

Personalities - Literature - A - Hameed

...nce. Most westerners who travel in Pakistan, and who can afford it, hire an armed driver, a bodyguard, or both. I used to hide my cellphone in a deep pocket and carry a wallet filled with paper to hand over to motor scooter pirates at intersections if someone stuck a gun in the car window to rob me.

While driving, Davis was tailed by two men for more than two hours (the timeline given by Pakistani officials). According to Davis's statements, at a

and had traveled to restricted areas without authorisation.

What's the real story?

Were they simply following and intimidating Davis, as Pakistani security officials have alleged? Or were they about to take out an American citizen who the State Department said had diplomatic immunity? Davis apparently thought this was the case. And what was it "our spy" was discovering about the ISI's black ops that Pakistan didn't want him to learn?

dead men's families.

A relationship of distrust: Islamabad now wants the CIA to reduce its presence in Pakistan. But the relationship between Islamabad and Washington has long been ugly and disingenuous. In December 2001, while the rest of the world was sympathising with the US after 9/11, I was interviewing the head of the Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami party who proceeded to tell me how much Pakistanis despised the US. This anti-American ani-

growing Indian influence in Afghanistan, and some contend that India funds anti-Pakistan Taliban factions responsible for terrorist bombings.

Along with that growing Indian presence, Islamabad is also sensitive to a growing Iranian sway in Afghanistan. As Pakistani journalist Aftab Borke observed, "Pakistan will always be anxious until it is the dominant, if not the only, player in Afghanistan." COURTESY THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

head, wearing a cap with ti...ly down to his throat, pres... He did not blink nor seem... of a soldier ready to shoot... rocket with a destructive... tons of TNT. Gates spoke s... ural manners of a host. The... so in the way I explained.

I have not often seen... than this; he was releasin... and using threatening lan... leader and urging his un...

A Hameed: Writer with a powerf

By Afzal Hussain Bokhari

A Hameed has written more than 200 books. These include Urdu she'r ki dastan, Urdu nasr ki dastan, Mirza Ghalib, Dastango Ashfaq Ahmad and Mirza Ghalib Lahore main

THE skeleton of shrunken bones that ceased to be at 2am on Friday in the intensive care unit (ICU) of Lahore's Jinnah Hospital had once been one of the most passionately loved romantic prose writers of the country. Caring and capable physicians in the Punjab metropolis battled for the writer's life for about six weeks in an amazingly professional manner. With failed lungs, the patient had clinically been dead for quite a few days and doctors had put him on artificial breathing machines.

Abdul Hameed, more popularly known as A Hameed, fell victim to the inhospitable April that had particularly been unkind to the ailing men belonging to the world of fine arts. It was unfortunate that, death having occurred at odd hours, the morning papers even in Lahore missed out on the event and a single-column, hurriedly written obituary note appeared

on the front page of a vernacular daily, the *Nawai Waqt*, to which the late A Hameed contributed some of his best written newspaper columns.

Literary reporter of the newspaper, Khalid Behzad Hashmi, kept giving disconcerting updates on the deteriorating health of the writer from time to time. On April 5, for instance, he shocked the readers by

Born in 1928 in Amritsar in undivided India, A Hameed had the irresistible romantic instinct that also ran in other writers from East Punjab such as poet Sahir Ludhianvi and in varying degrees in short story writer Rajinder Singh Bedi. While leafing through his travelogues of Sri Lanka, one can literally smell the intoxicating coconut plantations along the calm

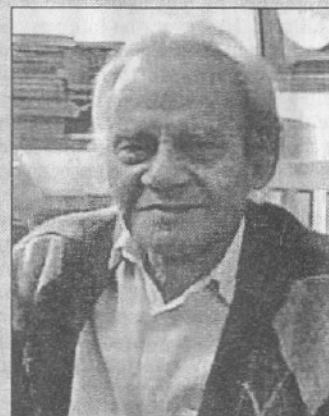
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saying that sheer weakness had rendered the ailing writer unable to communicate even by gestures. Writer's daughter Lalarukh specially flew in from Karachi to take care of her visibly slipping father. A Hameed's wife Rehana and Sahibzada Masood Hameed, lecturer in Lahore's National College of Arts (NCA), had constantly been attending to the patient's needs.

and serene beaches in Ceylon. His powerful narrative about the 'whispering lovers' often quickens the heartbeat of many a youthful reader.

The newspaper columns that he wrote under the title of *Yadon ke dareechay* were the best examples of nostalgia, the memories of a chain-smoking, clean-shaven and neatly-dressed handsome man about the emotional time spent, for

instance, in the studios of Lahore Radio along with people like Ashfaq Ahmad, Mustafa Ali



Hamadani, Akhlaq Ahmad Dehlvi and Abul Hassan Naghmi. Whether in Lahore or in Washington DC, the radio years were probably the most productive of all periods.

This scribe can recall a meeting in the 1990s with A Hameed on a hot summer afternoon on the lawns of his spacious house in Lahore's posh Samanabad. My school-going son blinked in disbelief when the author of his favourite television series *Ainak*

walla jinn sat before him explaining what was yet to happen in the next episodes. During the moments that A Hameed stole for some mature comments, he reaffirmed that as fiction writer he was best at ease while cashing in on nostalgia. At that time, A Hameed was living with his banker son and hardly showed any signs of illness that waited for him in the years to come. Though very few, but the tall and elegant trees on his lawn spoke volumes for his aesthetic sense.

In the good old days, Lahore had a rich stock of handsome men that wore impeccable dress, smoked the best cigarettes and sipped at tea in trendy cafes. For instance, the city had Mohammad Idrees of the *Pakistan Times*, writer A Hameed and poets Munir Niazi, Qateel Shifai and, last but not least, Salman Taseer. Apart from neat and clean habits and a quick eye for a pretty face, there was little else that they had in common.

Senior writer Hameed Akhtar was probably the first newspaper columnist to issue an appeal to the provincial as well as the federal governments to come forward and offer financial help to the family of ailing A Hameed. It was just a coincidence that two hours before A

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Hameed's death on the night between Thursday and Friday, romantic poet Amjad Islam Amjad was hilariously narrating to television anchor Sahir Lodhi how a husband and wife duo of MBBS doctors came to his house on their first wedding anniversary to admit to the fact that a love poem on page 92 of one of his poetic collections had driven them to tie the nuptial knot. Two hours past midnight, however, A Hameed stretched himself free of all visible knots and bonds.

Newspaper readers may recall an early April poem by Riaz-ur-Rahman Saghar in which he prayed to the almighty Allah that He might bless A Hameed with good health so that he was able once again to walk out the

hospital a normal human being. But this, alas, was not to be. A Hameed disappeared from the literary scene thus leaving the city culturally poorer and weaker. One hopes and prays that senior writers who are still the city's pride - Intezar Hussain, Bano Qudsia, Shahzad Ahmad, Amjad Islam Amjad and others - enjoy a good health and are blessed with a long life.

A Hameed has written more than 200 books. These include *Urdu she'r ki dastan*, *Urdu nasr ki dastan* (in which he has provided information about the literature of many Urdu prose writers from Banda Nawas Gesu Draz to the recent prose writers of Deccan and Gujarat), *Mirza Ghalib*, *Dastango Ashfaq Ahmad* and *Mirza Ghalib Lahore main*. ■