

Report

Conference on *Gharib Nawaz : A Bridge between Herat and Ajmer*

28-31 October, 2019

New Delhi and Ajmer

Institute of Indo-Persian Studies hosted three days international conference on “**Gharib Nawaz: A Bridge between Herat and Ajmer**” from 28-31 October, 2019 in New Delhi and Ajmer with the support of India Afghanistan Foundation, New Delhi Chapter. The inaugural ceremony of the conference was held at 7 pm on 28th October, 2019 in the Gandhara Hall of the Embassy of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, New Delhi. Mr. Ram Madhav, National General Secretary, Bhartiya Janata Party & Member, Board of Governors, India Foundation, was the Chief Guest at the function. Mr. Syed Salman Chishti, President, Chishti foundation, delivered the keynote address. Ms. Somaia Ramish, President, Naw Andeshan Cultural-Social Organization, Herat, Afghanistan, was the Guest of Honour on the occasion. The program began with national anthems of India and Afghanistan. Thereafter, a verse from Gitanjali was recited in English and Persian by Prof. Syed Akhtar Husain and Ms. Mozgan Movahed Osmani, respectively.

H.E. Mr. Tahir Qadiry, Charge'e d'Affaires and Head of Mission of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to India delivered a warm welcome address. In his address, Mr. Qadiry spoke about the deep rooted relations between India and Afghanistan and said that the conference, besides bridging the gap between Herat and Ajmer, also bridged the gulf between modernity world and Sufism. Appreciating the efforts of Institute of Indo-Persian Studies (IIPS) in bringing out a wonderful souvenir of the conference, Mr. Qadiry said that the message of IIPS President Prof. Syed Akhtar Husain on the very first page of it is suggestive of the fact that the Dari language and Sufism were the two binding factors which brought India and Afghanistan closer through the ages. He further said that the Sufi teachings of love, compassion and peaceful co-existence are needed more than anything else in Afghanistan today. At the end of his speech, he stressed on the need for organizing such gatherings to strengthen bilateral ties of the two countries in different spheres of life.

Prof. Syed Akhtar Husain, President, IIPS, in his introductory address stressed upon the importance of Persian language and literature and said that the purpose of the conference was

not to talk about the linkages between the two countries alone but to celebrate the legacy of Persian language and literature which India and Afghanistan share among themselves. Prof. Husain said that the rich heritage of Persian language and literature in India which is characterized by *Sabk-e-Hindi* or 'The Persian Style of India' which is spoken in India, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, must be preserved in letter and spirit. He further said that the people of the subcontinent have embraced Islam not from the Arabs rather they have imbibed universal Islamic teachings of humanity from the Persian speaking Sufis who taught love and humanity through their Sufi poetry based on the Quranic teachings and the same message can be found in the Veda and the Gatha and the Bible, as well.

Mr. Syed Salman Chishti, President Chishti Foundation while delivering the keynote address. said that the living legacy of Hazrat Khwaja Gharib Nawaz and his unconditional love and passion of serving humanity are conveyed to people every now and then. He expressed deep satisfaction over the spiritual bond between Chisht Sharif and Ajmer Sharif. He took pride in claiming himself a Khadim of Khwaja Gharib Nawaz. He and his community welcome people from all corners of the world irrespective of caste, creed, region or religion at Ajmer. He expressed satisfaction at the resumption of dialogue between the two sacred places of Chisht and Ajmer by Institute of Indo-Persian Studies. He appreciated PM Modi for invoking the teachings of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti in his speech during the inauguration of Salma Dam in Herat, Afghanistan.

Mr. Ram Madhav, National General Secretary, Bhartiya Janata Party & Member, Board of Governors, India Foundation, was the Chief Guest at the inaugural function. In his address Mr. Ram Madhav shed light on the long and cherished historical relations between India and Afghanistan and emphasized that the conference not only bridged the gap between Herat and Ajmer but also built road between Afghanistan and Hindustan. He said that the people of India cherish the relations that date back to the Mahabharata era of Gandhara. He said that the people of Afghanistan and India have one and the same civilisation. According to him, the very spirit of innate oneness has kept these civilized nations together historically. He remarked that although politics divide people but what binds them together is the civilizational spirit which is well represented by Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti. He further said that at a time when foreign aggressors were conquering the lands in the East, Khwaja Gharib Nawaz was conquering the hearts of the people with his ethos of love and humanity. He emphasized on the need to develop a syncretic culture in India and Afghanistan. Every religion has the potential to produce radicals but it is the duty and responsibility of our civil society not to get carried away by the

radicals. He reaffirmed India's commitment to the societal and economic development of Afghanistan and reiterated India's resolve to build peace in Afghanistan. He stressed upon the need to spread the message of unconditional love and non-violence of Khwaja Gharib Nawaz and Gandhiji respectively in our countries.

Somaia Ramish, President, Nau Andeshan Cultural-Social Organization, Herat, was the Guest of Honour on this occasion. In her address, she said that Herat and Afghanistan and Ajmer and India have a deep and significant place in the hearts of the people of both the countries. She was glad to see the development of relations between the two countries at different levels. She further said that Persian language was the most important binding force that brought the two nations together. She was highly pleased with the engravings of Persian scripts on Jama Masjid and other beautiful monuments of the Mughal period in India. She appreciated India's efforts in the construction of Salma Dam which according to her was the 'Friendship Bridge' between the two countries and has both historical and economic significance. She also thanked WAPCOS for the construction of the Salma Dam in Afghanistan and Institute of Indo-Persian Studies to promote Persian language and literature in India. Dr. Md. Arshadul Quadri, Vice president, IIPS proposed a vote of thanks to the guests and participants.

On 29 October 2019, four academic sessions of the conference were held in Lecture Room-I, India International Centre (Annexe) New Delhi in which 21 papers were presented, out of which 5 were taken as read. First academic session began at 9:00 am and continued till 10:30 am. Professor Abdul Khaliq Rashid of Jawaharlal Nehru University chaired the first session of the conference and the panelists were Dr. Abid Hossain, Ms. Mozhgan Movahed Osmani and Dr. Nasreen Hossain.

Dr. Abid Hossain, Assistant Master of Persian in the Anglo-Persian Department of Calcutta Madrasah (Madrasah Aliyah) presented a paper on the contribution of Shaikh Nuru-'d-Din Qutbi-Alam to the Chishtiya order in Bengal. He highlighted the contribution of Shaikh Nuru-'d-Din in the light of his significant works ***Maktubat***, ***Anis ul Ghuraba***, ***Munis ul Fuqara*** and the ***Khanwada-i- Chisht***.

Ms. Mozhgan Osmani, faculty at Herat University, discussed the poetic forms and structure in the Diwan of Khwaja Gharib Nawaz which possessed dynamism from syntactical point of view. Her paper covered a discourse on poetry as a form and poetry as an art to determine the poetic art of Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.

Dr. Nasreen Hossain, Assistant Teacher Persian at C.M.O. Girls' High School, Kolkata was the last speaker of the first academic session. She introduced Siraj as a mystic poet of Chishti order in South India in her paper. She discussed at length various facets of the mystic poetry of Siraj Aurangabadi.

Professor Abdul Khaliq Rashid, the Chair of the session, summed up the papers presented in the session and also gave valuable suggestions to the panelists.

Second session of the conference began at 10:30 am till 11:30 am. It was chaired by Professor Sharif Husain Qasemi. It was the panel consisting of speakers: Ms. Nilofar Neksyer, Professor Mohammad Nasir Rahyab and Ms. Forozan Amiri, all from Afghanistan.

Ms. Nilofar Neksyer, lecturer of Persian language and literature in Herat, spoke on the manifestation of Sufism in the poetry of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti. She also discussed the relationship between mysticism and literature and spoke on the suitability and adaptability of Mysticism in Persian poetry.

Prof. Mohammad Nasir Rahyab, Vice Chancellor Ghalib University, Herat, presented his paper on the mysticism in poetry with reference to Sufic texts in Persian. Through his paper Professor Rahyab covered vital issues i.e. the points of convergence and divergence between poetry and sharia; the mystic interface with poetry; mysticism a poetical rendering of religious teachings.

Ms. Forozan Amiri, presently working as a specialist of Dari language in the Ministry of Education in Kabul, Afghanistan, presented a paper on Herat as a birth place of Chishtia order. Her paper primarily focused on the emergence of Chishtia order in Afghanistan and the role of Herat and Chisht in the origin and development of Chishtia order in Afghanistan and India.

Professor Sharif Husain Qasmi, chair of the session, emphasised on the importance of Sufism in Persian poetry and enlightened the audience about the life and teachings of the Chishti Sufis in India.

Third academic session began at 12 noon and was chaired by Professor Aleem Ashraf Khan, Department of Persian, University of Delhi. Dr. Md. Arshadul Quadri, Ms. Narvan Rajayee, Dr. Mukesh Kumar Sinha and Mohammad Dawood Monir presented their scholarly papers in this session.

Dr. Md. Arshadul Quadri, a faculty in the Dept. of Persian, University of Lucknow, presented a paper titled *Professor Khaliq Ahmad Nizami's Take on the Chishtiya Order of Islam*. The discussion of Dr. Quadri mostly revolved around the studies of Professor Nizami regarding the Chishtia order: its rise and fall and the causes that led to the weakening of the order in North India.

Ms. Narvan Rajaee is a lecturer of Persian in the Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Kahkeshan Sharq Private University, Herat. She threw light on the contribution of celebrated Sufi saints to the progress and development of Chishti order in Afghanistan.

Dr. Mukesh Kumar Sinha, an independent scholar, presented his paper on Khanqah Pir Damaria of Bhagalpur and tried to showcase the Piri-Muridi bond of the Khanqah and its allegiance to Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti and Khwaja Nizamuddin Auliya.

Mohammad Dawood Monir, Vice Chancellor of Herat University, Afghanistan, presented a paper on the culture of assimilation and tolerance in Islamic Mysticism including the Chishtia order with reference to the works of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti and Amir Khusro of Delhi. In his paper, Dr. Monir gave a deep insight into the teachings of Chishtia order which covered the importance of assimilation and tolerance in civil society.

The fourth and last academic session of the conference began at 2 pm under the chairmanship of Mr. Mohammad Afsar Rahbeen, Director, National Archives of Afghanistan. Professor Abdul Khaliq Rashid, Professor Muzaffar Alam, Professor Khwaja Mohammad Ekramuddin, Ms. Somaia Ramish, Dr. Golam Moinuddin and Mr. Md. Abrarul Haque were the paper presenters in the session.

Prof. Abdul Khaliq Rashid, visiting professor in the Centre of Persian and Central Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, reflected on ethical values in Persian poetry. Prof. Rashid emphasized that ethical values ingrained in Persian poetry are very much important for propagation of the message of peaceful co-existence and humanity. He opined that Rumi of Balkh, Sanai of Ghazna, Hafiz of Shiraz and Amir Khusro, the Parrot of India, are among the masters of ethics and spirituality who constantly guided us from the complex life to a simple one.

Prof. Muzaffar Alam, Department of Arab Studies, The English & Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, presented a paper titled: Sheikh Moinuddin Sanjari: A Confluence of

Uloom-e- Zahiri and Uloom-e- Batini. His paper focused on the personality of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti as an exponent of Shariat and Tariqat.

Professor Khwaja Mohammad Ekramuddin, Centre for Indian Languages, Jawaharlal Nehru University, spoke at length about Sufism in Urdu poetry. He was of the view that Urdu poetry which began under the shadow of Persian poetry borrowed forms and contents, including Sufism, from Persian literature. The poetic tradition of Umar Khayyam, Maulana Rūm, Hafiz Shirazi, and all others were transferred into Urdu poetry that propagated the values of unity in diversity.

Somaia Ramish, poetess, writer, civil activist and peoples' representative at the Provincial Council of Afghanistan, discussed Sufism in Persian literature. She was of the opinion that Sufism cannot be brought under one geographical or religious umbrella as from Islam to Buddhism, Brahminical laws to Western Philosophy, all roads lead to Sufism. Therefore, Sufism can be traced in Philosophy, Ethics, Literature, Art and Music. According to her, Persian literature can be termed as the second language of Sufism. Sufism is deeply rooted in the prose and poetry of Persian literature.

Dr. Golam Moinuddin, Assistant Professor in the Department of Persian, Maulana Azad College, Kolkata, presented a paper titled 'Sufis of Chishti Order in the Writings of Muhammad Iqbal'. He presented Iqbal's views on Sufism who believes in the part of Sufi literature which deals with morality and action as highly valuable because they glow the hearts of the readers.

Md. Abrarul Haque, research scholar in Centre of Persian and Central Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, presented a paper on Mughal Princess Jahanara Begum as a Sufi writer. According to him, Jahanara's interest in Sufism led her to write two Sufi treatises: *Munisul Arwah* and *Risala-i-Sahibiya*. Both the books show her deep interest in Sufism.

The valedictory session of the conference on "*Gharib Nawaz: A Bridge Between Herat and Ajmer*" was held on 29th October, 2019 at 4 pm in Lecture Room-I, India International Centre (Annexe). Mr. Anupam Mishra, Director (Commerce &HRD) WAPCOS Limited, Gurgaon, was the Guest of Honour. Mr. Akhilesh Mishra, Director General, ICCR, Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi was the Chief Guest on this occasion. Professor Khwaja Mohammad Ekramuddin, Professor Mohammad Nasir Rahyab and Professor Muzaffar Alam expressed their remarks on the outcome and deliberations of the conference.

Mr. Anupam Mishra, while addressing the gathering, said that he learnt two things from the inaugural function of the conference that was held the other day; one was the Persian language and the other the bond between India and Afghanistan. He further said that representing WAPCOS which was involved in the construction of a dam in Herat, it also resulted into construction of a spiritual bridge between Chisht and Ajmer. He lauded the efforts of Institute of Indo-Persian Studies, Nau Andeshan Cultural-Social Group, The Chishti foundation, Ajmer in organizing an exceptionally important conference.

Professor Khwaja Mohd. Ekramuddin in his remarks said that Sufism teaches humanity which is indeed the need of the hour. He said that the universal teachings of *Tasawwuf* do not differentiate human beings on the basis of religion. He further said that a person came from Herat (Khwaja Gharib Nawaz) to India, preached the message of love in India and in the same way India constructed Salma Dam in Herat to strengthen that bond. Hence, the relations between India and Afghanistan are not only measured by materialistic success but by spiritual linkages also.

Professor Mohd. Nasir Rahyab in his remarks said that nowadays people are so westernised and feel that everything ancient is considered as old and out-dated and on the contrary anything new that comes from the West is good. According to Mr. Rahyab one of the challenges of Post Modernism is Post Colonialism about which Homi Bhabha and Edward Said have spoken in clear terms. They advised the people of the East to recognize their worth and do not run after everything European. Indians or Afghans who went to Europe are at the cultural crossroads and are still neither Western nor Eastern. He said that Islamic mysticism stands against all kinds of tyranny, injustices and bias and it spreads love and brotherhood. He added that India is the best example of peaceful coexistence where people of diverse cultures live side by side.

Professor Muzaffar Alam in his remark said that the topic of the seminar was most relevant in the present scenario and assumed more significance than ever before. Highlighting the aims and objectives of the conference, he said that one of the basic purposes of the conference was to restore the precious legacy Persian culture which is common between the people of India and Afghanistan.

Last but not the least, **Mr. Akhilesh Mishra**, Director General, ICCR and Chief Guest of the valedictory function, enthralled the audience with his erudition. Mr. Akhilesh Mishra who was also the Head of Indian Mission in Afghanistan during the year 2008-2010 said that the spontaneous love and affection and natural affinity between the people of India and Afghanistan

can only be appreciated by those who have experienced it. Having been touched by the hospitality of the people of Afghanistan he said that there is bond of love between the people of the two nations. He emphasized that the government of India was in the forefront and made efforts for the reconstruction and socio-economic development of Afghanistan. He further reiterated India's commitment to support Afghanistan in every manner desired by the Afghan government. He said that Afghanistan is supremely endowed with human talent and five to ten years of peace would catapult it among the most prosperous countries in Asia. Therefore, he advised the Afghan people to stay positive and not to be influenced by temporary hiccups. He said that India and Afghanistan are connected by not only Islam but also by Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. He acknowledged Indian PM's efforts to build cordial relations with almost all the Islamic countries of the world with one or two exceptions. He drew similarity between the ideas of Sufism and the one propagated by ancient Indian sages and recited several verses from Persian and Sanskrit to substantiate his claims.

Professor Syed Akhtar Husain chaired the valedictory function of the conference. He requested the Chief Guest Mr. Anupam Mishra and the Guest of Honour Mr. Akhilesh Mishra to release the *Yadgar-i-Ghalib* the biography of Mirza Ghalib translated from Urdu into Dari by Mr. Afsar Rabeen. He thanked the India Afghanistan Foundation, Delhi Chapter and staff members of Embassy of the I.R of Afghanistan, New Delhi, Ms. Somia Ramish, Chishti Foundation, the hon'ble guests and participants for making the three day conference fruitful and successful.

The delegates of the conference left Delhi for Ajmer on 30th October 2019 to pay their obeisance to the shrine of Khawaja Gharib Nawaz. Mr Salman Chishti received them at the Dargah and explained the history and rituals of the holy shrine. On 31st October 2019, early morning the delegates were felicitated at the Shrine. They paid their obeisance at the holy tomb and having received the blessings of Khawaja Gharib Nawaz, they returned to New Delhi on the same day. Mr. Akhilesh Mishra, Director ICCR, hosted a dinner in the honour of the delegates at Azad Bhavan, ICCR, New Delhi on 31st October 2019.

The conference has been covered by Dari and Persian Units of All India Radio and the program was broadcast on 30th October 2019 for Afghanistan and Iran and other Persian speaking countries. It has also been covered Delhi Doordarshan in India. The Times Group has reported it on 30th October 2019 at Ajmer.