



One-Day International Conference

(Hybrid Mode)

On

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and Beyond: Exploring India–West Asia Knowledge Traditions

Organised by

Centre for West Asian Studies (CWAS)

Jamia Millia Islamia

New Delhi



23 MARCH 2026 | MONDAY →

Patron

Prof. Md Mahtab Alam Rizvi

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ABSTRACT

The Centre for West Asian Studies (CWAS), Jamia Millia Islamia, proposes to organise a One-day International Conference (hybrid Mode) titled “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and Beyond: Exploring India–West Asia Knowledge Traditions” on 23 March 2026. The conference seeks to examine the long-standing civilisational, intellectual, and cultural interactions between India and West Asia through the philosophical lens of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam—the idea of the world as one family. While the conference broadly focuses on historical and contemporary knowledge exchanges encompassing philosophy, science, trade, religion, politics, and culture, it also integrates a significant focus on language, literature, translation, and pedagogical traditions, particularly Urdu and its linkages with Arabic and Persian in alignment with the mandate of the National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL). The conference aims to situate Urdu as a vital intellectual and cultural bridge in India–West Asia relations, reflecting its historical role in scholarship, administration, literature, and people-to-people exchanges. The conference will be conducted in a blended mode to ensure wider participation. Its outcomes will include peer-reviewed publications, an edited volume, and policy-oriented recommendations, contributing both to academic scholarship and to institutional goals related to cultural diplomacy, language promotion, and civilisational dialogue.

About the University

Jamia Millia Islamia, a Public Central University; established in 1920, originally at Aligarh in United Provinces which in 1925 initially moved to Karol Bagh, Delhi and later built up in Jamia Nagar. In 1988, it became the Central University by an Act of Parliament and since then it is expanding in different directions achieving new dimensions. The mission of the founding fathers of this great institution should not only serve as a beacon light for all the stakeholders, but should also inspire all in making this university as one of the premier institutions of higher learning in the world. It should attain distinction in providing cutting edge learning experience, internationally benchmarked education, intellectual freedom and critical research opportunities in frontier areas of contemporary concern. Today, Jamia Millia Islamia is accredited A++ grade Central University by NAAC during the 2nd cycle in December 2021. The university is an ensemble of a multi-layered educational system which covers all aspects of schooling, undergraduate and post-graduate education.

About the Centre for West Asia Studies

The Centre for West Asian Studies was established in July 2004 and formally inaugurated by Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India, on 29 January 2005. It is part of the institution founded under a programme of the research and development initiated by the Jamia Millia Islamia, a university steeped in secular values and ideas. The scope of the studies includes all the countries of West Asia including Turkey. India has always had multifaceted relations with peoples of the region. The Centre seeks to foster interdisciplinary academic pursuit of the West Asia and promote research on the region's politics, economies, culture and its relations with India as well as its interconnections to a larger global milieu. It aims to provide a forum for informed exchange of ideas among students, faculty, and scholars from outside, and serve as a niche for public policy studies. It equally aims to generate and provide resources through which the interested and expert alike, can understand a region which has close and historic cultural, economic and religious links with India. It also seeks to promote an Indian perspective on developments in the region, especially those which equally impinge on global peace, security and development. The Centre admits students in M.Phil and Ph.D programmes for two and five years, respectively. The educational objective of the Centre is to impart specialist knowledge of the region to its students, in order to enable them to pursue careers in research and teaching, journalism, business, government and non-governmental organisations, and others. As West Asia becomes an increasingly important region for India and the wider world, the Centre is expected to excel with newer research and taught courses. It remains committed to deepening knowledge of the region through rigorous teaching, innovative research, and essential language-learning modules.

CONCEPT NOTE

For centuries, India and West Asia have been deeply interconnected through trade routes, migration networks, religious movements, and sustained knowledge exchanges. These interactions facilitated the circulation of scholars, manuscripts, scientific ideas, artistic practices, and linguistic traditions across regions stretching from the Indian subcontinent to the Arab world, Persia, and the Mediterranean. A substantial dimension of this knowledge exchange was mediated through languages, especially Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and later Urdu. Urdu, emerging from sustained contact between Indic and Perso-Arabic traditions, evolved as a composite language that absorbed intellectual, literary, and cultural influences from West Asia. It became a major vehicle for poetry, philosophy, historiography, religious thought, and education in South Asia, while also serving as a medium of cultural continuity among Indian diaspora communities in West Asia.

At the same time, the broader India–West Asia knowledge relationship extended beyond language to include philosophy, political thought, science, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, ethics, and systems of governance. Ancient and medieval translation movements, institutions of learning such as madrasas and libraries, and courtly patronage systems enabled the synthesis of ideas across civilisations. These exchanges laid the foundations for shared intellectual traditions that transcend modern political boundaries. In the contemporary era, these historical linkages have gained renewed relevance amid globalisation, digital knowledge networks, and evolving geopolitical realities. India–West Asia relations today are shaped not only by strategic and economic considerations but also by cultural diplomacy, educational cooperation, diaspora engagement, and soft power. Revisiting shared knowledge traditions—while foregrounding linguistic and literary continuities—offers an alternative framework for understanding cooperation based on mutual respect, cultural pluralism, and ethical global engagement.

Aims and Objectives

The conference aims to:

1. Examine historical and contemporary knowledge exchanges between India and West Asia using Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam as a conceptual framework.
2. Analyse shared civilisational traditions in philosophy, science, religion, political thought, and culture that shaped India–West Asia interactions.
3. Highlight the role of Urdu, along with Arabic and Persian, in mediating intellectual, literary, and cultural exchanges between India and West Asia.
4. Explore translation movements, manuscript traditions, and educational institutions that facilitated multilingual knowledge transmission.
5. Assess the relevance of traditional knowledge systems and linguistic heritage in contemporary contexts such as cultural diplomacy, migration, and global governance.
6. Provide a multidisciplinary platform for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to engage in academically rigorous and policy-relevant dialogue.

Encourage young scholars and early-career researchers to contribute to research on civilisational dialogue, language, and knowledge traditions.

Thematic Structure

I. Civilisational Interactions and Historical Knowledge Networks

- Trade routes, migration, and intellectual mobility across the Indian Ocean and Silk Road
- Continuity and hybridity in India–West Asia civilisational encounters

II. Political Thought, Ethics, and Universalism

- Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and comparable universalist ideas in West Asian traditions
- Statecraft, governance, diplomacy, and moral philosophy

III. International Relations and Knowledge Traditions

- Knowledge as soft power and cultural capital
- Civilisational perspectives on diplomacy and global order

IV. India–West Asia Bilateral and Multilateral Engagements

- Historical and contemporary relations with key West Asian states
- India's role in regional and global institutions

V. Religion, Identity, and Interfaith Intellectual Exchanges

- Islamic, Hindu, Jewish, and Christian traditions
- Coexistence, pluralism, and ethical dialogue

VI. Language, Literature, and Translation Movements

- Arabic–Persian–Urdu–Sanskrit literary exchanges
- Translation traditions, court culture, and patronage
- Language as identity, power, and diplomacy

VII. Science, Medicine, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems

- Ayurveda, Unani, astronomy, mathematics, and environmental knowledge
- Decolonising knowledge and recovering non-Western epistemologies

VIII. Migration, Diaspora, and Transregional Societies

- Indian and West Asian diasporas
- Cultural and linguistic continuity among migrant communities

IX. Education, Pedagogy, and Knowledge Institutions

- Madrasas, universities, libraries, and archives
- Urdu as a medium of instruction and scholarship

X. Culture, Art, and Material Knowledge

- Architecture, music, visual arts, and craft traditions
- Cultural production and social power

XI. Knowledge Diplomacy and Cultural Relations

- Cultural diplomacy, language promotion, and people-to-people ties
- Literature and language in global cooperation

XII. Contemporary Challenges and Future Directions

- Digital knowledge, cultural preservation, and innovation
- Language, identity, and globalisation

Submission Guidelines

Eligibility

The conference invites participation from scholars, researchers, and practitioners working in the fields of International Relations, Political Science, West Asian Studies, History, Cultural Studies, Religious Studies, Economics, Linguistics, Literature, and other closely allied disciplines. Interdisciplinary and comparative research contributions engaging with Urdu and its intellectual, literary, and cultural linkages with Arabic and Persian are especially encouraged.

Abstract Submission

Participants are required to submit an expanded abstract of 250–300 words, clearly outlining the research topic, objectives, methodology, conceptual or theoretical framework (where applicable), and the main arguments or findings. Submissions addressing language, literature, translation movements, manuscript traditions, educational institutions, and cultural exchange with specific reference to Urdu.

Deadline for abstract submission: 15 March 2026

Notification of Abstract Acceptance: 18 March 2026

Mode of submission: Abstracts should be submitted via email to g.arahman@jmi.ac.in

Language of Presentation

While papers may be presented in English or Urdu, participants are especially encouraged to present their papers in Urdu to promote its academic use in India–West Asia knowledge traditions.

Travel Allowance

Train fare by AC 3-Tier or AC 2-Tier will be reimbursed upon submission of a copy of the confirmed travel tickets. Reimbursement will be processed as per institutional rules.

Registration Fee

A registration fee of ₹500 will be charged from all selected participants. Details regarding the mode of payment will be communicated after acceptance of the abstract.

Review Process and Notification

All submitted abstracts will be evaluated through a peer-review process to ensure academic rigour, originality, and thematic relevance. Special consideration will be given to submissions that align with the conference objectives and contribute to the promotion of the Urdu language and literature within broader India–West Asia knowledge traditions. Authors of selected abstracts will be notified of acceptance and provided with further instructions for submission of the full paper.

Full Paper Submission: Authors whose abstracts are accepted will be invited to submit a full-length research paper.

- **Word limit: 5,000–7,000 words**
- **Deadline:** To be communicated upon acceptance of the paper
- Papers must conform to standard academic conventions, including in-text citations and references. The latest APA citation style is preferred. Papers drawing upon primary sources in Urdu, Persian, or Arabic are particularly encouraged.

Formatting Guidelines

Submissions should include the following details:

- Title of the paper
- Author's name
- Institutional affiliation
- Contact information

Expected Outcomes

- Peer-reviewed conference proceedings and/or an edited volume
- Policy-oriented recommendations on cultural and knowledge diplomacy
- Strengthened academic networks between India and West Asia
- Promotion of Urdu and related linguistic traditions in international academic discourse
- Capacity-building and mentorship of young scholars

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