

January 28, 2019

Press Release:

A lecture on Nineteenth Century Urdu Cosmopolis by US Professor at JMI:

The Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia organised a lecture ‘Cosmopolitan Dreams: The Making of Urdu Literary Culture in Colonial South Asia’ on 23rd January, 2019. The speaker of the session was Jennifer Dubrow, an associate Professor in the Department of Asian Languages and Literature at University of Washington, USA. The title of the lecture pertains to Dubrow’s eponymous book, published in October 2018.

In her extension lecture, which was in the form of a book- talk, Dr. Dubrow emphasized on how, in the late nineteenth- century, the arrival of print stimulated a vigorous and shared Urdu literary culture in South Asia. This, she did through a Power Point presentation, rendering the talk more interesting and interactive. Dr. Dubrow drew on Urdu-language periodicals and newspapers, which found their way to public sphere, establishing a culture where modern daily life could both be portrayed and satirized. The print culture in Lucknow, especially the role of the Naval Kishore Press formed a major part of the discussion. Apart from cities like Lucknow, Hyderabad and states like Punjab where Urdu culture and literary output have always thrived, Dr. Dubrow highlighted the lesser-known fact that it’s also small towns like Kanpur, Moradabad, Badaun and several other small Qasbahs which can lay huge claims to contributing heavily to the Urdu literary scene.

Emphasizing mainly on the newspaper, Oudh Akhbar and the weekly, TheAwadh Punch, both published during the nineteenth century in Lucknow, Dr. Dubrow cited examples from the works of Pandit Ratan Nath Sarshar, particularly his Fasana-e- Azad and those of Akbar Allahabadi. Arguing against the popular misconception of Urdu as an exclusively Muslim language, Dubrow demonstrated that as in the late nineteenth century, Urdu was and still is a cosmopolitan language spoken by a transregional, transnational community moving above and beyond the rigidities of religion, caste, and class. Apart from print culture, the lecture also brought to the purview the popularity of Pakistani dramas in India which has been a major contributor to, in turn, the interest of the masses in Urdu language, particularly among youngsters. There was also a sense of nostalgia as the lecture reminded of a time when enthusiastic readers used to wait for the postman, with whom came their copies of periodicals containing serialised novels, a vignette touched upon by the speaker herself.

The lecture was delivered to a packed house, consisting of undergraduate and postgraduate students, research scholars, faculty members and Professor Wahajuddin Alvi, Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Languages, Jamia Millia Islamia. The lecture was followed by a question and answer session wherein both students and the faculty participated. It ended with an address by Professor Muhammad Asaduddin, followed by a vote of thanks by Professor Nishat Zaidi, Head, Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia.

Ahmad Azeem
PRO-Media Coordinator

We need something *more* to live
And to express that "more"

Is banned

Oh, [you] owners of the palaces of belief
Oh, masters of laws and politics

In the name of Life, I demand only one kindness
Permission to commit all that is banned!







