

Press Release

JMI's India-Arab Cultural Centre organises an Extension Lecture on "Sufism and Persian Poetry: Tradition and Legacy"

New Delhi, November 28, 2025

The India-Arab Cultural Centre at Jamia Millia Islamia organised an extension lecture on November 26, 2025, entitled "Sufism and Persian Poetry: Tradition and Legacy," presented by Professor Akhlaque Ahmad Ahan, Chairperson of the Centre for Persian and Central Asian Studies, School of Language, Literature, and Culture Studies at JNU. Professor Nasir Raza Khan, the Honorary Director of the Centre, chaired the lecture. The event attracted a diverse audience, keen to explore the profound connections between Sufism and the rich tapestry of Persian poetry. Attendees engaged in lively discussions, reflecting on the enduring influence of these traditions on contemporary cultural expressions.

Prof. Nasir Raza Khan, hony director of the Centre, firstly thanked the honourable Vice Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia, Prof. Mazhar Asif Sb. for granting permission to organise the extension lecture series, and he also acknowledged the university's Registrar, Prof. (Dr) Md. Mahtab Alam Rizvi, for his support and considerations. He then introduced the theme by highlighting the significance of today's lecture while speaking on Sufism and Persian Poetry, he focused on Multiculturalism, Identity, as propagated by Sufism, and discussed how the modern world require the healing message found in Rumi's poetry, which advocates for compassion beyond identity.

Dr. Md. Aftab Ahmad formally introduced the speaker and contextualised the traditions relevant to the topic. He contextualised the topic's importance within contemporary socio-intellectual discourse. He also discussed the expertise and contributions of today's speaker. Professor Akhlaque Ahan, a renowned scholar of Sufism, Persian literature, and Islamic intellectual traditions, contextualised these traditions. Professor Ahan in his lecture presented a wide-ranging exposition on the historical evolution, philosophical grounding, and literary manifestations of Sufism, with a particular emphasis on Persian poetic traditions. The speaker began by discussing the etymology of the word *Tasawwuf*, highlighting various scholarly interpretations. He explained that the term 'Sufi' has been associated with multiple roots. One view traces the term to "Suffah," which refers to the *Ashab-e-Suffah*, a group of devoted companions of the Prophet who lived near *Masjid-e-Nabawi* and embodied simplicity, spiritual dedication, and *faqr* (poverty for God). God). Other linguistic associations include "Safa" (purity of heart) and "Suf" (wool), which allude to the simple woollen garments worn by early Sufis. Professor Ahan explored how Sufism gradually transformed from an individual spiritual tendency into an

ideological and organised movement. This movement became increasingly organised, especially as it developed in Mecca and Medina, often deliberately detaching itself from worldly indulgences. The speaker elaborated on the intellectual and spiritual frameworks through which Sufis have historically approached the concept of God. References were made to Hegel's engagement with Oriental notions of divinity, including his exploration of dualities within the concept of God.

The speaker also briefly reflected on Marx's reversal of Hegelian ideas, highlighting how these philosophical trajectories affect theological thought. The speaker drew upon the teachings of Hazrat Yahya Muniri. The speaker noted that Hazrat Yahya Muniri was a major Sufi of the Shattari tradition from Bihar Sharif. In *Maktubāt-e-Sā'dī*, Muniri identifies three categories of belief regarding God. Hazrat Yahya Maneri identifies those who deny God as "*munkir*." Those who outwardly exhibit belief but lack genuine conviction are referred to as *munāfiqīn*. The Sufis are those who realise God through deep spiritual experience. Professor Ahan highlighted the profound transformation in Islamic intellectual and cultural life following the Mongol destruction of Baghdad.

The unprecedented devastation triggered significant migration to India, especially to rural regions. During this period, major Sufi orders such as the Chishtiyya and *Naqshbandi* flourished. Persian literary traditions shifted dramatically due to the influence of the Chishtiyya and Naqshbandiyya Sufi orders. From *Hamasa* (epic poetry) and *Qasida* to the *Ghazal*, now centred—from themes of *Ishq* (divine love) and self-realisation. Poets like Rumi, Sa'di, and Hafiz become central figures in articulation Sufi ideas.

The lecture was followed by a lively question & answer session. Both students and faculty actively engaged with the speaker, raising insightful questions on Sufi philosophy, Persian literary traditions, and the contemporary relevance of mystical thought. The programme concluded with a formal Vote of Thanks delivered by Dr Zulfikar Ali Ansari, who acknowledged the speaker, chair, organisers, and participants for their meaningful contributions to the intellectually enriching event.

Prof. Saima Saeed
Chief Public Relations Officer






