

Report

of the International Conference:

Sufism of Chishti Order: A Bridge between Herat and Ajmer

The inaugural function of the two-day International conference on *Sufism of Chishti Order: A Bridge between Herat and Ajmer* was held on 1st September at 9:45 am in Marmar Hall of the Arg Hotel in Herat, Afghanistan. The conference was jointly organized by Institute of Indo Persian Studies, New Delhi, India and Naw andishan Cultural-Social Organization, Herat, Afghanistan with **the financial support of India Afghanistan Foundation**. IIPS has displayed widely IAF on all its publicity materials. The inaugural function began with the recitation from the Holy Quran by Prof. Muzaffar Alam, Dean School of Arab and Asian Studies, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India. It was followed by singing of the national anthems of Afghanistan and India. Ms. Somaia Ramish, President of Naw andishan welcomed the delegates and dignitaries to the function. She spoke about the shared history of friendship between India and Afghanistan in her welcome address. India has always played an important role in the socio-economic development of Afghanistan. She further said that the conference of this nature would help in establishing Herat and Ajmer as sister cities. The Hon'ble Governor of Herat Mr. Asif Rahimi mentioned that this conference would certainly open a new chapter in India- Afghan relationship in years to come. Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti had received the Sufi teachings from Chisht Shareef that subsequently connected people of Afghanistan with India. He further added that the Salma Dam built by Indian Government is the latest example in the contemporary history of Indo-Afghan friendship. Mr. Syed Fazil Sancharki, the Deputy Minister of Information and Culture, Afghanistan praised the organizers in organizing this conference and choosing the theme which was apt in the present scenario of Afghanistan. He added that this conference would heal the ailments of present day society in Herat in particularly and Afghanistan in general. Today the people in United States of America seek spiritual guidance from Maulana Jalaluddin Balkhi. Afghanistan was the land of Sufism from where the Sufi streams found way into various

parts of South Asia. Hence India and Afghanistan must play an active role to disseminate the Sufi teachings in various parts of the warring world.

Syed Salman Chishti, the 26th generation of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti and Chairman of the Chishti Foundation, Ajmer was overwhelmed with sentiments and emotions while delivering the inaugural address. He is the first one in his family to visit Herat in the last 800 years when Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti had travelled to India to preach Sufism and settled down in Ajmer. He said that the main objective of the Chishtiya Order is to spread love and peace among people irrespective of caste, creed and color in civil society. He mentioned that Indian Prime Minister had also mentioned that Herat-Ajmer as sister cities of Afghanistan and India while he was inaugurating the Salma Dam in 2016. H.E. Shri Kumar Gaurav, Consul General at Indian Consulate in Herat graced the occasion as Chief Guest. He being well versed in Indian history and having personal interest in Sufism applauded the theme of the conference. He mentioned that Khwaja Abdulla Ansari, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti and Jami had played very crucial role in promoting peace in the belligerent society of Asia. He added that the former Vice President of India, Mr. Hamid Ansari is a direct descendent of Khwaja Abdulla Ansari, the Patron Saint of Herat. Mr. Gaurav also looked upon the *Band-e Dosti* or Salma Dam as an important land mark to connect people of India and Afghanistan. At the end he asked the delegates of the two countries to take pledge to build and develop socio-cultural relations among the peoples. Mr. Nasrullah Partaw Naderi, an eminent poet of Afghanistan recited his poem composed on the pattern of *Nainama* of Maulana Jalaluddin Balkhi. His poem spelt out the power of love to develop civil society in our materialistic age. Professor Daud Munir, President, Literary Society of Herat and Professor of Dari at Herat University called Amir Khosrow and Amir Hasan Sijzi as the flag bearers of Persian literature in India which stood for love and peace. Professor Syed Akhtar Husain, Present of IIPS focused upon the importance of Dari language and culture in his presidential address. He explained Dari language as the language of culture and Sufism. Professor Husain further mentioned that Sufi poets and writers of Khorasan or Central Asia adopted Dari as a medium to promote peace and love among humanity and enrich the literary heritage in India. He

concluded that Dari and Sufism are the bondages that connect Herat with Ajmer and this conference would play a crucial role in strengthening India-Afghanistan relations in promoting Dari language and Sufism between the two nations.

Prof. Aleem Ashraf Khan, Vice President IIPS proposed a hearty vote of thanks to India Afghanistan Foundation, Naw andishan Cultural-Social Organization, Herat, H.E. Mr. Kumar Gaurav Indian Consul General at Herat, News18 and all the print and electronic media of India and Afghanistan, guests and participants and friends of India and Afghanistan and members of the diplomatic corps in the Embassy of Afghanistan in New Delhi particularly Mr. Fazal Haq Faqiry and Mr. Azad and Indian Consulate at Herat for supporting IIPS to host the conference in befitting manner in Herat, Afghanistan. Special thanks were proposed to Mr. Hamid Tahzeeb and Mrs. Mastora Arghandewall who made sincere efforts to support IIPS to bridge Herat and Ajmer by means of this Sufi Conference. A Sufi music programme marked the grand finale of the inaugural function.

There were four academic sessions held in the two-day conference on 1-2 September 2018 in Marmar Hall of the Arg Hotel in Herat in which 18 papers were presented on various themes of Sufism. Professor Nasir Rahyab and Professor Daud Munir of University of Herat; Mr. Afsar Rahbeen, Director Archives, Kabul; Ms. Frouzan Amiri and Ms. Narwan Rejai of Kakhkashan (East) University; Mr. Humayoun Mohtat were the participants from Afghanistan. Among the 12 Indian participants were included: Professor Syed Akhtar Husain, Professor Md. Khwaja Ekramuddin, Professor Aleem Ashraf Khan, Mr. Nadeem Akhtar, Mr. Firoz Alam, Mr. Abrarul Haque from Delhi; and Professor Muzaffar Alam and Dr. Mahmood Alam from Hyderabad; Dr. Mahtab Alam from Bhopal, Dr. Nasreen Hossain from Kolkata and Mr. Syed Salman Chishti from Ajmer and Prof. Arif Ayyubi from Lucknow.

The participants of the conference also visited the shrines of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari, Mir Ali Shernavai, Abdur Rahman Jami and other historical places of Herat. By the courtesies of the Governor of Herat; WAPCOS; MOFA, Afghanistan; Indian Consulate, Herat, District Administration, Chisht Shareef,

the delegates of the conference were able to visit to Salma Dam and pay their tribute to the shrine of Syed Abdal Maudud Chishti at Chisht Shareef. The delegates also visited War Museum at Herat and the Director of the Museum Agha Sahab Khatli hosted a sumptuous dinner in honour of the Indian guests.

The valedictory function of the two day conference was graced by the presence of four eminent speakers from Heart and India who expressed their remarks on the conference and was chaired by Mrs. Somaia Ramish. Prof. Daud Munir expressed his pleasure to meet scholars from India who discussed Sufism at length in the conference and thanked the organizers of the two countries to give opportunity to the academic fraternities to meet each other at Herat. Prof. Nasir Rahyab was overwhelmed with joy to discover himself amidst Indian scholars who conversed with him in Dari. He said that our country is in dire need of PEACE. India is a cradle of Democracy. The hardworking, humble, loving and learned people of India have brought the values of Sufism and Persian literature with them to Herat. It is indeed heartening to listen from them, the messages of the prophets of love such as Rumi, Khaja Moinuddin Chishti, Nizamuddin Aulia and Khusrow. The present conference has indeed built a bridge between Herat and Ajmer. Prof. Arif Ayyubi appreciated the deliberations and presentation of papers at the conference and recommended that in the next conference to be scheduled at Ajmer, India in 2019 special focus must be made on Vedanta and Sufism. Prof. Muzaffar Alam also appreciated the theme and venue of the conference and the efforts of IIPS to promote Sufism and Indo-Persian literature beyond the frontiers of India. He said that Sufism and Love are interchangeable and synonymous terms. Afghanistan and her people still retain natural traits and characteristics and have not been defiled by sophisticated materialism of the West. They are amenable to the teachings of Sufism and eager to build the bridge between Herat and Ajmer. Dr. Mahmood Alam, General Secretary IIPS, thanked the audience for participating in the valedictory function of the conference. On behalf of IIPS he acknowledged the financial support of India Afghanistan Foundation in hosting the event.