

JAUHAR

Volume 02 | Issue 02 | Dec 2011- Feb 2012



Reason and Rhetoric

They are known for their religious teaching, but madrasahs can teach modern schools a lesson or two in the art of argumentation

INSIDE

On campus: Doctor of Letters for Amartya Sen; new hostel for J&K students ... **P 7**

Course of Action: European and Latin American Studies **P 12**

Page out of the Past: Premchand's last story, written for Jamia's magazine **P 20**





◆9 Faculties ◆37 Departments ◆27 Centres of Excellence and Research ◆231 Courses ◆642 Faculty Members
◆Over 15,000 Undergraduate, Post-Graduate and Diploma/Certificate Students

Contents



IN FOCUS

Essential reading

Madrasahs are regarded as being synonymous with religious education. Few know that the wards of these institutions excel in the art of reasoning and rhetoric4

COURSE OF ACTION

In the Latin land

Emphasis on cultural studies of Latin American countries, coupled with an array of foreign language courses at CELAS12

STUDENT ZONE

Vibgyor vision

An attempt to understand the worldview of Jamia students 14

Reimagining multiculturalism

Essays that won two students a trip to England; Biosciences honours17

PAGE OUT OF THE PAST

Rites of passage

Premchand wrote his last story *Kafan* on the Jamia campus for *Risala Jamia*20

A musical knot

Three decades ago, Amita not only found her calling in life at Jamia, but her life partner too22

Also

ON CAMPUS

Happenings in Jamia8

FACULTY PROFILE

Faculty publications.....23



Jauhar is published by The Registrar,
Jamia Millia Islamia, Maulana Mohamed
Ali Jauhar Marg, New Delhi 110025

Editorial Board:
Simi Malhotra, Media Coordinator
Zahid H Khan, **Abdul Bismillah**,
S. Ghazanfar H. Zaidi,
Mukul Kesavan, **Dakshita Singh**

Ph: +91-11-26981717,
EPABX: 1050/1051; +91-11-26980090
Fax: +91-11-26980090;
E-mail: mediajmi_outreach@yahoo.com

Jauhar is Printed by Enthuse-Answers
Communications Pvt. Ltd.
Z-35, IInd Floor, Okhla Industrial Area
Phase-II, New Delhi-110020

Photos:
Amlan Paliwal

Design and Production:
IANS Publishing
www.ianspublishing.com

Chief Patron: **Najeeb Jung**,
Vice-Chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia



Maulana Mohamed Ali 'Jauhar'
Founder, Jamia Millia Islamia

From the Vice-Chancellor

It was a period of sporting and cultural excellence. For the first time in its history, Jamia Millia Islamia recently won the All-India Inter University Hockey Tournament. The boys played some great hockey, scoring over 25 goals in the tournament. Likewise several of our other sporting stars are touring the country, participating in different tournaments and bringing laurels to the University.

We have also had a spate of visits from Presidents and Vice-Chancellors of universities from across the world; they are looking forward to collaborating with Jamia for future programmes. Among those whom I had had the honour of receiving were delegations from the universities of Melbourne, Zurich, Ottawa, Malaysia, Afghanistan and New York. This clearly demonstrates that Jamia is making a name for itself globally.

The British High Commission organised an Essay-Writing Competition for the students of Jamia. Two of them were selected on the basis of their essays and presentations and sent for a study tour of UK for two weeks.

The University held a series of memorial lectures, national and international seminars, and conferences where we have had the privilege of hosting some of the leading thinkers of our times. And it was our proud privilege conferring an *Honoris Causa* on Nobel Laureate Dr. Amartya Sen.

A number of infrastructure projects have been completed and those include new hostel facilities for boys and girls, and new blocks to house the Office of the Controller of Examinations, the Centre for Comparative Religions, and the Centre for Basic and Interdisciplinary Sciences. Meanwhile, the University Grants Commission has sanctioned two more area studies programmes. Therefore, the Academy of International Studies will now be introducing the Afghanistan Studies Programme and the China Studies Programme, making it one of the leading academies for area studies in India.

In a nutshell, it's been a fulfilling and happy time for the University. I also wish our students the very best as they settle down to prepare for their final examinations.

Najeeb Jung
Vice-Chancellor



Essential

Contrary to stereotype, the madrasah is a seat of rigour, rhetoric, grammar and classical learning, imparting to its students superior skills in the art of argumentation and persuasion, key skills in making sense of the world we inhabit, says **Mukul Kesavan**

When I first came to Jamia to teach, some thirty years ago, the madrasah in my mind was a quaint holdover from the past. In the course of studying colonial Indian history I had read about the Darul Uloom at Deoband and the Nadwatul Ulama in Lucknow, but I didn't think of them as living institutions; they belonged to the past as firmly as Humayun's Tomb did.

I knew, as a historian, that the Darul Uloom at Deoband and the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental (MAO) College at Aligarh, the precursor of the Aligarh Muslim University, had been founded inside 10 years of each other in the late 19th century; despite that knowledge, the madrasah at Deoband was, for me, a medieval seminary, while AMU was a great modern university.

There was, of course, a reason for the stereotypes in my head. The Darul Uloom, as Barbara Metcalf had shown us in her authoritative book (*Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*) was established to preserve a style of traditional Muslim education and learning threatened by colonial modernity, whereas MAO College was founded by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan as a model of modern, western-style education for Indian Muslims. So for those like me with a superficial understanding of these institutions, the former belonged firmly to the past while the latter didn't merely have a glorious history, it had a future.

So in 1983, complacent in the 'correctness' of my

Ikramul Haque from Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow, now pursuing a master's in History at Jamia



reading

knowledge of the world, I came to teach at the Department of History in Jamia. Jamia wasn't a Central University in those days; it was a Deemed University, just one notch higher than the degree-giving college it once had been. It was a much smaller place than it is now and the BA Honours class in the History Department had all of five students. The brightest of them, by far, was a student called Mohammad Ishaq, now Dr. Mohammad Ishaq and a distinguished member of Jamia's faculty in the Department of Islamic Studies.

Ishaq was from a madrasah, and he wasn't just a brilliant student, he was brilliant in an engaged and argumentative way. While his classmates deferred to my views as a teacher, Ishaq had strongly-held views of his own and we had long arguments inside and outside of class about history, modernity, community and the nature of nationhood. What struck me as particularly impressive, even formidable, was the way in which his arguments combined rhetorical rigour with remarkable language skills. Ishaq was the first student I encountered who had been educated in a madrasah and while he was exceptional in every sense of that term, I discovered, in the course of the years that followed, that he was also in many ways representative of a madrasah education.

For example, while correcting tutorials I discovered that students from madrasahs often wrote the more cogent and consistent essays. This was for two main reasons. First of all, their essays were generally written in Urdu. Since their readings were mainly in English, this meant that they had to paraphrase and translate their understanding of these texts before they could incorporate them in their essays. As a result these essays were, perforce, written in their own words. They didn't have the option, which my English-medium students had and sometimes exercised, of cutting and pasting whole paragraphs from the articles and books that they read and joining them together in a kind of collage to confect a tutorial.

Secondly, madrasah students had been taught rhetoric as part of their curriculum. Rhetoric is the art of argumentation, of discourse. From Aristotle

onwards, rhetoric was a central part of classical education both in the West and the Muslim world. It was no coincidence that essays written by madrasah students were cogently and forcefully argued: they had been given a first-rate training in the skills of persuasion. Invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery: these five canons of rhetoric informed both their written and spoken arguments.

A well-rounded template

Over the years, it has become clear to me that while there are many short-comings to the quality of education provided in the run-of-the-mill madrasah (as there are in the average 'modern' school), their strengths, that is, their emphasis on teaching rhetoric, logic and grammar, their success in teaching students from underprivileged backgrounds, and languages, both classical and modern, were consid-

THEY'RE ELIGIBLE

Some Madrasah courses recognised by Jamia for admission

The following courses, with English of Sr School Certificate (10+2)/Intermediate standard, have been recognised for admission to the BA (Pass/Hons) 1st year courses

- Alimiat of Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow
- Fazeelat of Madrasatul-Islah, Sarai Mir, Azamgarh, UP
- Alimiat of Bihar State Madrasa Education Board, Patna
- Fazil of West Bengal Madrasa Education Board, Kolkata
- Alimiat of Jamia Darussalam, Omerabad, Tamil Nadu
- Alimiat of Jamia Serajul Uloom, Al Salafiah, Jhanda Nagar, Nepal
- Alimiat of Jamia Islamia Kashif-ul-Uloom, Aurangabad, Maharashtra
- Alimiat of Jamia Ibn Taimiya, Champaran, Bihar
- Alim of Darul Uloom Al-Islamia, Basti, UP
- Alimiat of Jamia Syed Ahmed Shaheed, Malihabad, Lucknow, UP

The graduates of the following madrasahs, having passed the examination in English of Senior School Certificate/Intermediate from Jamia Millia Islamia or any other recognised university, are eligible for BA (Pass/Hons) 1st year

- Darul Uloom, Deoband
- Madrasa-i-Alia, Fatehpuri, Delhi
- Alimiat of Jame-ul-Uloom Furqania, Rampur, UP
- Alimiat of Jamiatul Banat, Gaya, Bihar
- Fizat of Jamia Husainia Arabia, Raigad, Maharashtra

(This is an indicative list. There are other madrasahs too on the list.)



erable. And not only were they considerable, these were also strengths that contemporary schools in Delhi and other metropolitan cities in India could learn from. So when we talk about 'modernising' or 'mainstreaming' madrasah teaching, we should also remember that there is a great deal that modern schools and colleges can learn from the pedagogical practice of madrasahs.

I want to emphasise the way in which madrasah students in Jamia have enriched the University with their language skills. The teaching of classical languages in modern secondary schools is perfunctory and its results are derisory. My academic cohort and I learnt Sanskrit for three years in school and I'd be willing to lay a small bet that not one in a hundred of us remembers anything of the language. This isn't just confined to classical languages. The emphasis on grammar, logic and rhetoric perceptibly improves a madrasah student's modern language skills both in speech and in writing.

I don't want to gloss over the problems of madrasah education, but it is useful to remember that most of them are problems with all educational institutions in India: an absence of resources and infrastructure, a shortage of skilled and specialised teachers and the challenge of systematically renewing a syllabus and a school system so that it responds to the challenges of modernity.

At a time when policy makers are increasingly concerned with drawing into the process of development those who live outside the charmed circle of big cities and large to medium-sized towns, madrasahs are one way in which mofussil India is drawn into the metropolis. The story of Ikramul Haque is instructive. He studied in Azamgarh, a town in Uttar Pradesh, at Madrasatul-Islah. From there he travelled to Lucknow to study Arabic at a more celebrated seminary, the Nadwatul Ulama. From there he made the journey to Delhi when he applied to Jamia for the BA Honours degree in History and was accepted.

By his own account, Ikram has found his educational journey various and fulfilling. "I had an interest in Urdu literature and had read a lot. I wanted to connect those stories to history, because behind every story, there is history. Others had sug-

Abu Nasar, a madrasah student from Azamgarh, now pursuing MA in Islamic Studies

gested that since I had studied Arabic I should join Arabic, but I thought I already know the language and it would be a waste of time. I was firm that it had to be English or History, but I didn't get admission into English. I was also firm that I had to study away from home, as being at home would mean a lot of people to distract you all the time. I applied in BHU too but finally opted for Jamia."

We see here not a rejection of traditional education, but a self-conscious drive to build upon it, to test it against a modern curriculum and to look for more expansive horizons. Ikram enjoys the social freedom of a modern metropolitan campus. He has worked very hard to improve his English and finds that his reading of the world and of the place of religion in it has changed, but he isn't uncritical of the milieu in which he now finds himself. He finds a lack of drive amongst some of his contemporaries, an absence of focused curiosity, an unwillingness to cultivate a sense of history and a systematic knowledge of the world. There is a seriousness to Ikram that has something to do, I think, with his madrasah training, the almost solemn sense that education is meant to help you make sense of the world.

Students like Ikram represent a vital connection between India's cities and their hinterlands; without this connection, without the educational platform that madrasahs provide young provincial men in a world of constrained opportunity, contemporary India would be a more divided and inequitable place than it is today.

— Mukul Kesavan teaches at the Department of History, Jamia Millia Islamia





Jamia honours Amartya Sen

Sen conferred 'Doctor of Letters' for his contributions to the advancement of knowledge

The highest contribution any form of higher education can make is the cultivation of questioning and doubt," said Nobel Laureate Prof Amartya Sen in an oration at Jamia Millia Islamia on December 16, 2011. Prof Sen was addressing the Jamia community after being conferred an *Honoris Causa* (Doctor of Letters) by Jamia. The citation presented to him read: "In honouring Professor Amartya Sen with the degree of Doctor of Letters (*Honoris Causa*), the Jamia Millia Islamia, an institution established to encourage innovative thought and champion the cause of India's freedom, acknowledges his seminal contribution to the domain of knowledge, scholarship and critical thought."

In his address, Prof Sen queried, "Does higher education make a huge difference?" Referring to the likes of Mahatma Gandhi, Karl Marx, Nelson Mandela and Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Prof Sen observed that higher education had played a significant role in their lives in helping them achieve the goals they had set for themselves in public life.

Referring to what Prof Sen described as "the cultivation of questioning and doubt", he quoted Francis Bacon and said that there was "an inviolable connection between knowledge and doubt".

On the occasion, Vice Chancellor Najeeb Jung referred to "the importance of being Amartya Sen in these polarised times". "The lesson of his remarkable life for all of us in the University is fourfold: that subject categories are meant to be enabling, not stifling; that the life of the mind is most meaningful when it harnesses curiosity to the cause of humanity; that good policy has to be derived from clear first principles and that intellectual life isn't peripheral to gov-



ernance, it is central to it; and, that there is no contradiction between being a grounded Indian and a citizen of the world," Jung said.

"Professor Sen has been Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, President of the American Economic Association and Professor at Harvard without once ceasing to be an engaged Indian. This has to do with more than the colour of his passport. It is connected to his attachment to Bengal, his socialisation in Santiniketan, his immersion in the history of the sub-continent, and above all, his conviction that cosmopolitanism and Indianness are functions of one's values, not one's location," Jung observed.

Prof Amartya Sen is one of the world's foremost economists who was awarded the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences. In 1999, he was awarded the Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian award of India.

Prof Sen is currently the Thomas W. Lamont University Professor and Professor of Economics and Philosophy at Harvard University. ♦

A million mutinies...

Activists, officials reflect on root causes of Naxalism and problems of Kashmir and the North East

At a symposium sponsored by the UGC on 'India: A Million Mutinies' on February 1 and hosted by the Human Rights Programme at the Department of Political Science, activists, mediapersons, scholars and officials analysed the Naxal movement and the problems afflicting the state of Kashmir and the North East.

There was general agreement that there was much that needed to be done for the country. The problems that had bogged the country should have been taken care of long ago by taking the fruits of development to the last man, the speakers observed. Besides, corruption and exploitation were alienating the country's citizens, they added.



‘Partition, an erroneous term’

Former senator and scriptwriter of *Ramchand Pakistani* Javed Jabbar seeks to explain the reason for Pakistan’s creation, and its uniqueness



As producer and scriptwriter of *Ramchand Pakistani*, depicting the travails of a Hindu Pakistani boy living on the border between India and Pakistan and caught in the tensions between the two countries, Javed Jabbar displays touching sensitivity about the hardships of the people of the two countries.

A former senator and Minister of Information and Broadcasting of Pakistan, Jabbar was invited to speak on the theme of ‘Pakistan’s National Identity: Evolution and New Challenges’. The seminar was organised by the Pakistan Studies Programme, Academy of International Studies, Jamia, in association

with Jinnah Institute, Islamabad, and the Australia-India Institute, Melbourne, on January 25 as part of Jamia’s Distinguished Speaker Series.

Delving into the creation of Pakistan, Jabbar said it was erroneous to use the term ‘partition’ or to say that, “Pakistan had seceded from India”. However, “Pakistan’s identity was not India-fixated.”

Placing the creation of India as a nation in the category of a “post-colonial construct”, he justified the “idea of Pakistan as a nation” by citing Jinnah: “We maintain and hold that Muslims and Hindus are two major nations by any definition or test of a nation. We are a nation of a hundred million... we are a nation with our own distinctive culture and civilisation, language and literature, art and architecture, names and nomenclature, sense of value and proportion, legal laws and moral codes, customs and calendar, history and traditions, aptitudes and ambitions...”

Describing Pakistan’s uniqueness, he referred to its vivacious culture, music, cuisine, and the arts; the pride of migrants who have made Pakistan their home; the pride of non-Muslims in Pakistan (citing the story of *Ramchand Pakistani*, which, he said, was a real-life story); and, the general disgust at the lack of great leaders and the crises that the country is embroiled in. ♦

A diplomat proposes, academia disposes

British policy towards West Asia will apply the principle of ‘consistency’; scholars beg to differ

What should ideally be the guiding principles of a country’s foreign policy vis-à-vis what actually happens on the ground? Sir Geoffrey Adams, Director-General (Political), Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK, presented his views on his country’s approach to the ‘Arab Spring’. “We approach these movements with the conviction that stability is more likely to be reached through representative movements,” he said. Referring to British policy towards West Asia and the Arab Spring, Sir Adams laid down three principles:

• “While we recognise that developments in each

country are very different, we should approach them with consistency in policy. In each case, we should show respect for human rights and oppose use of violence by either party.

- We should realise that if these movements succeed, they can transform the region. This presents an opportunity for all countries.
- We should recognise that it’s about them, not us.

During the Q&A session, many remarked that there was “no consistency in British policy” and that it applied “different yardsticks to different countries”. ♦

Meaningful dissent

Activist Aruna Roy calls for a formal platform for dissent; refrains from acrimony against politicians



Aruna Roy (L)

Outreach Programme and Academy of International Studies in collaboration with Asia Society India Centre and *Open* magazine. “We need a formal platform for dissent and public policy should be open to public debate,” Roy suggested.

However, she added ‘caveats’ too. “We criticise the government but government is important. By

Dissent has come to be seen as a dirty word. Those dissenting are seen as anti-state and anti-national, they are pushed against the wall. It has become a black and white scenario of ‘you are with us or against us’,” observed Aruna Roy, activist and member of the National Advisory Council. Roy was speaking at a seminar on ‘Democracy, Dissent and Movements for Change’, organised by the

rubbing government, what are we saying? Are we leading to a government which is Fascist and where there is no scope for dissent?” she asked. Referring to politicians, she said, “I have stopped looking at them as dregs.” Also, the youth must, “to weed out the rot, enter the muddy waters”, she added.

The event was in the form of a Q&A session between Manu Joseph, Editor-in-Chief, *Open* magazine, and Roy. ♦

Hostel for J&K students

Jamia signs MoU with Ministry of Home and J&K Govt

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on February 9 between Jamia Millia Islamia, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, and the Jammu & Kashmir Government for the construction of hostels to accommodate students from Kashmir. Jamia’s Registrar Professor S.M. Sajid signed the MoU on behalf of the University in the presence of Home Minister

P. Chidambaram, J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, and Vice Chancellor Najeeb Jung.

The proposed hostel facility will be for 400 students of postgraduate, graduate and school-level students (separate for boys and girls) from J&K. The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 16.22 crore. Construction is expected to be complete within 24 months from the date of commissioning. ♦

ODE TO Tagore

Scholars reflect on the myriad dimensions of his multifaceted personality

Although Rabindranath Tagore at a certain level internalised considerable personal melancholy, his poetry was “a cascade of joy and inspiration”. Tagore crafted new musical tones and had extraordinary taste for music as he absorbed a variety of intellectual influences that brought him closer to the “melody of Hafiz Shirazi on one hand and the “human compassion and pathos of Christianity” on the other, observed Prof Gopichand Narang, ex-President, Sahitya Academy, at a national seminar on the theme of ‘Tagore: Mind and Art’ in late November, 2011.

Inaugurating the seminar, Jawahar Sircar, Secretary, Union Ministry of Culture, described Tagore as the founder of modern art, adding that his paintings had “layers of meaning and interpretation” and that his “agony and pain” formed a strong “undercurrent” in his paintings.

In his presentation, Prof. S.M. Azizuddin Husain, Dean, Faculty of Humanities, said that from an intellectual point of view, Tagore was part of India’s “mystical legacy”. In Tagore, one can discern a synthesis of Maulana Rumi and Sheikh Bu Ali Qalandar Pani Pati, Prof Husain added.

Referring to Tagore’s philosophy and worldview, Dr Khalid Javed described the diction of Tagore as being akin to the “language of the Upanishads”, adding, that it was Tagore who gave a firm grounding to abstraction in Indian philosophy.

Other scholars presented papers on themes, such as Tagore’s poetry, music, art and novels; his political worldview; Gitanjali; Tagore and Premchand; Tagore and Iqbal; and Tagore’s impact on regional writers.



Hard times, Nobel work

Prof Mustafa Riad of Egypt delves into the seven-decade long writing career of Naguib Mahfouz



Prof Mustafa Riad (left) with Dr Mukul Kesavan

Nobel Laureate Naguib Mahfouz’s writing career started in the Thirties and he wrote till the turn of the millennium. He was witness to remarkable upheavals in his country, beginning with the struggle against British rule down to the Mubarak era. His writings reflect this socio-cultural milieu of the dynamic country, facing a period of turmoil spanning more than a century. Discussing his work with the audience was Prof Mustafa Riad, Department of English, Ain Shams University, Cairo. Prof Riad

was delivering the Fifth Munshi Premchand Memorial Lecture on ‘Naguib Mahfouz and the Making of Modern Egypt: The Dilemma of Modernity’ at Jamia Millia Islamia.

Prof Riad described the settings and characters of Mahfouz’s works — from novels to short stories to one-act plays — “ranging from the lowest to the highest classes, holding widely different views about what constitutes Egyptianness”. He presented an interesting parallel between the march of Egypt as a nation in the modern world and Mahfouz’s own evolution as a writer, who did “relentless experimentation in various forms of writing”.

Referring to the Egyptian revolution, he said that with the Muslim Brotherhood coming to power, civil rights could be curbed again, adding, “Yes, this is true but we have to go through this and try out this Islamist solution. In England too, the Puritans ruled for sometime. They got England into a civil war before England reverted to monarchy.”

Prof Riad also referred to an emerging phenomenon in Egypt. “The young people in Egypt are now more interested in Islamic studies. But they are much influenced by a particular interpretation of Islam that goes back to the Wahabi sect. Islam is more comprehensive and is not to be equated with the Wahabi version. It’s a universal religion,” he observed. Dr Mukul Kesavan from the Department of History & Culture, chaired the session. ♦

Hazrat: A saint ahead of his times

An exposition on the life and times of the great, pathbreaking Sufi seer

Prof I.H. Siddiqui, historian and former Chairman, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, delivered the First Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia Memorial Lecture on ‘Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia’s Humanism’ at Jamia Millia Islamia.

Referring to the evolution of Hazrat’s philosophy, Prof Siddiqui said how the spiritual atmosphere in Badauni and the spirituality of Hazrat’s mother, in particular, had deeply influenced his early years. Taught by some of the best teachers of Badauni, Hazrat would later move to Delhi — a city with many

Sufi ‘silsilas’ — for higher education.

Hazrat embraced a progressive worldview. Therefore, unlike his predecessors, who did not admit everybody into their ‘silsilas’, Hazrat was of the view anybody should be able to enter the fold and given the opportunity to repent their mistakes.

Hazrat also embraced emancipation and insisted that his *murids*, who used to employ slaves, set them free. To help cultivate a scientific temperament, Hazrat also used to discuss aspects of the sciences with his *murids*, Prof Siddiqui said. ♦

What constitutes documentation?

Noted documentary maker Nasreen Munni Kabir discusses the importance of archiving

Archiving is preserving for posterity the thought process that has gone into the making of a cinema. What you see is the end result. What you cannot find is the thinking and the kind of personality that went into making that work,” said Nasreen Munni Kabir in an illustrative presentation on the art of archiving. Kabir was delivering the ‘Annual Anwar Jamal Kidwai Memorial Lecture’ to a packed auditorium in Jamia Millia Islamia.



Showing a snippet from her interview with Lata Mangeshkar where the singer narrates a childhood experience, Kabir said, “In observing how a person speaks, you can learn so much about that person.” Interestingly, she added,

“Stars are least interesting. It would be worthwhile to record technicians and poets... It’s sad that we don’t have even 10 minutes of footage on Sahir Ludhianvi.”

Kabir urged the youth to “work for history, ask bigger questions to know the craft of film making, and understand a filmmaker’s contribution to cinema and his technique”.

Based in London, Kabir’s body of work over 30 years include TV programmes for Channel 4, documentaries and books that seek to preserve the legacy of Indian cinema and serve to introduce Bombay cinema to an international audience much before the term Bollywood gained global currency.

Her documentaries include *In Search of Guru Dutt*, *Follow That Star: A Profile of Amitabh Bachchan*, *Lata in Her Own Voice* and the *Inner and Outer Worlds of Shah Rukh Khan*. Kabir also wrote Dialogue Books that introduce and comment on the original scripts of films like *Mughal-E-Azam*, *Pyaasa* and *Mother India*. ♦

THEN AND NOW

An exhibition on the life and works of Dr Zakir Husain, the longest-serving Vice-Chancellor of Jamia and Indian President (1967-69), was organised at the Premchand Archives in the University. Dr Husain, who joined Jamia as Vice-Chancellor upon his return from Germany, worked relentlessly to strengthen the University in its initial years, when it was faced with financial hardships. The stories of a life of personal deprivation led by Dr Husain and his likes have passed into University lore. He also evolved a sound philosophy of what constituted a correct approach to education.

(Below: Vice-Chancellor Najeeb Jung at the exhibition)



In memoriam

In memory of Nausheen Jaffery who was a research scholar in history, the Department of History and Culture in Jamia has now published her MPhil dissertation on *Jahan Ara Begum: A Bibliographical Study* she wrote a little before she died of bone marrow cancer in 2004. The book is an in-depth study of Shah Jahan’s daughter and Aurangzeb’s sister Jahan Ara (1614-1681), who played an influential role in the Mughal polity.



Jaffery had begun her career as a research assistant with Dr Margrit Pernau for her book *Identity of Old Delhi Muslims in the 19th and 20th Century*. Later, Jaffery would translate *Arastujah* by Tamkin Aazmi from Urdu to English for well-known writer William Dalrymple. Jaffery was guided in her dissertation by Prof S.M. Azizuddin, Dean, Faculty of Humanities. ♦



In Latin land

The Centre for European and Latin American Studies at Jamia is fostering an understanding of Latin American countries, besides offering courses in foreign languages

India is increasingly looking to Brazil and other Latin American countries for better and stronger economic ties. BRICS (Brazil, India, China & South Africa) as well as IBSA (India, Brazil & South Africa) envision closer cooperation between India and Brazil. Unfortunately, there is a considerable lack of understanding about these countries and their social structures and cultures, facets that are critical to the conduct of diplomacy and business with them.

Taking the lead in this direction is the Centre for European and Latin American Studies (CELAS) at Jamia Millia Islamia, which has launched an MPhil in European Studies and Latin American Studies last year. Prof. Sonya Surabhi Gupta, the Founder-Director of the Centre, says: “The idea behind launching the centre was to have a core group of researchers working on Latin America as a region. The focus of the course is not just international politics and trade relations, but an understanding of the region’s societies and cultures.”

The programme is, however, in its nascent stage. Prof. Gupta, who has spent 20 years at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, (CIEFL, now rechristened the English and Foreign Languages University), says there’s hardly any expertise in this domain. “But at CELAS, the language teachers come with an understanding of the culture of these countries and are pooling in their expertise for research work,” she says. Besides, there are extension lectures too, with faculty from the University of Delhi and JNU being invited to teach modules. In a sense, the current batch of research students at CELAS would be the first crop of experts on Latin American cultural studies.

One such expert in the making is Sameera Y. With a master’s in International Relations from Pondicherry University, she has enrolled herself for an MPhil in Latin American Studies. She is also doing a Diploma in Spanish from the same centre. The MPhil course takes up issues like gender, race,

ethnicity and national identity, among other areas, as part of which the students get to read writings of various scholars and thinkers. Of course, these are either works of Latin American authors in English translations, or works of European or American authors, writing about Latin America. By next year, Sameera hopes to be able to read the originals too.

The course has generated a lot of interest in diplomatic circles too, with Latin American embassies planning to start exchange programmes. Similarly, European universities have also shown interest in exchange and sandwich programmes with CELAS.

Languages

The centre offers an array of courses in languages (*see box*). As Prof. Gupta says, “The language wing of the Centre has grown by itself and a large number of students are opting for these courses. Thus, CSLAS now has twin strengths.”

Those opting for languages come with diverse aspirations. There are students like Vaijayanti Banerjee, a student of MPhil History at the Faculty of Humanities and Languages, who is pursuing a Certificate in French here. For her, learning French was critical as part of her course work in History. Similarly, Masihuddin Khan, a student of tourism, has taken up an Advanced Diploma in Spanish, as it’s compulsory to learn a foreign language as part of the course. Then there’s Tarikh Anwar, a BTech from Aligarh Muslim University, who has taken up a certificate course in French to advance his hobby of learning a foreign language. Syed Waqar Ahmad, doing an Advanced Diploma in Russian, after completing mechanical engineering from Al Falah School of Engineering and Technology, Faridabad, has taken up the language with a long-term view — Russia and other breakaway countries of the erstwhile USSR are looking for engineers in defence, automobile and oil and gas segments. Hemant Kumar, a IIIrd-year BCom student from



Language lounge

COURSES ON OFFER AT CELAS

MPhil in European Studies/ Latin American Studies	10 seats
Advanced Diploma in Spanish	30 seats
Advanced Diploma in Portuguese	20 seats
Advanced Diploma in French	30 seats
Advanced Diploma in Russian	10 seats
Advanced Diploma in Italian	30 seats
Diploma in Spanish	40 seats
Diploma in Portuguese	20 seats
Diploma in French	40 seats
Diploma in Russian	20 seats
Diploma in Italian	30 seats
Diploma in Catalan	20 seats
Certificate in Spanish	50 seats
Certificate in Portuguese	30 seats
Certificate in French	50 seats
Certificate in Russian	30 seats
Certificate in Italian	40 seats
Certificate in Catalan	20 seats

the University of Delhi, joined a diploma course in Catalan out of curiosity and interest and doesn't regret his decision, for he got a scholarship to go to Barcelona to learn the language further. And he got to spend 45 days there. Similar scholarships exist in Italian, Spanish and Russian languages too, and for longer duration. A few students doing advanced diploma courses at CELAS recently competed with masters students of DU and JNU, and secured 10-month-long scholarships in Russia.

Job opportunities are also abundant, especially in the BPO sector. Companies like TCS, Oracle, Kotak Mahindra, American Express, Genpact and Convergys lap up students by the end of their courses. Students are also known to have joined master's programmes from other universities and taken up translation/interpretation jobs. One such graduate is already a teacher at CELAS. Purshottam Singh, a tourist guide who can speak Thai, Tibetan and Sinhala, and who is now doing an Advanced Diploma in Italian, also wants to do an MA in Italian and become a "professor".

An ideal take-off point for a global career. ♦



Vibgyor vision

What constitutes the worldview of the Jamia student? An attempt to understand the ethos of the University's students...

With what aspirations does a youngster join the world of Jamia? How does she perceive Jamia's place in society? What role does she see for herself in society? How does she react to mounting tensions in the world today, primarily on account of religion? What's topmost on her mind? What are her priorities? And importantly, how does the world outside perceive Jamia? These questions crop up in one's mind about an institution, which, founded in the backdrop of the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1921, has steadfastly upheld its secular credentials, but about which perceptions of the world outside are largely ill-informed.

An attempt at understanding the worldview of Jamia students, however, has its own complexities. Though the University has a large representation from the Muslim community, it is also home to abundant diversity, with students from not only other communities but also from far-flung regions of the country. Not just that. The Muslim students on campus themselves come from a variety of backgrounds and represent equally diverse aspirations: on one hand, there are students from top Delhi schools, and, on the other, from madrasahs across the country.

Thus attempting to identify or comprehend the worldview of a Jamia student is fraught with social, political and philosophical challenges. There may be trends and patterns but little that can be put together to arrive at a 'homogenous' worldview.

Different strokes

Diversity is of the essence. You have students like Nida Fatima from a madrasah in Delhi, now pursuing a master's in Urdu, who wants to be an Urdu school teacher; you have Mohammad Azharuddin from Darbhanga, Bihar, who left home because he wanted "to do well in life", and went on to file an RTI in JNU when he failed to secure admission there. He is currently doing a bachelor's in Hotel Management, Travel and Tourism.

Take Farha Bano, a student of MA Hindi, who

wants to dispel the notion that only Muslim students take up Urdu. "There's no restriction on reading *Ramcharit Manas* or the *Bible*." Raised by her brother, who is a construction worker, Farha wants to become a successful news anchor and has already visited the offices of Sahara to get a feel of what it entails to be one.

Samreen Mushtaq, an MA Political Science student from Kashmir, was born in 1989, the year trouble erupted in Kashmir. She has been a topper throughout in Baramullah despite extensive loss of class hours. She says, "In Kashmir I was always occupied with conflict. Here my mind is free. Away from home you recognise yourself better..."

"I have never seen such diversity, and representation from so many backgrounds. I didn't have to change much..."

For others, coming to Jamia has been an act of matter-of-fact decision-making. Ayesha Hussain, a IIIrd-year Engineering student, had got through to NIT Rourkela and Srinagar, but opted for Jamia instead because she wanted what she called a "cosmopolitan atmosphere". In fact, she takes it seriously and went on to bring to Jamia, on her own initiative, a TEDx event, the iconic global "congregation of ideas".

For Wasif Hussain, another Engineering student, joining Jamia after schooling at Frank Anthony was not a landmark shift, though now that he is here, he is happy that he is getting to learn about religion and is able to offer *namaaz* regularly. "I have reached an age when I should learn all this. If not now, when will I learn?"

First impressions

Often backgrounds matters, especially in terms of perspectives. Nithya, a graduate in Mass Communication from DU, and currently a master's student in Political Science in Jamia, refers to a certain "lack of argumentation" and assertion among her peers: "While seminars like Kashmir are jam-packed, students are not really responsive, not argumentative." While Ikramul Haque, a student from Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow, now pursuing MA History, feels that some students could be potentially without specific aims and objectives, Arishma Sahani, an Islamic studies student, who schooled in Manipur, argues, "Students here have their heart into making a career and doing something for society. They know what they want."

Sense of freedom

The manner of clothing is really not an issue of contest among most Jamia students. Nithya says that when she joined Jamia, her friends had apparently warned her that even teachers on campus prefer conservative clothing. "On the first day I chose to wear western casuals. But absolutely nothing happened." Similarly, Miranda Mutuwa from Imphal, pursuing an MA in History, felt reassured when she found that what one wore on campus wasn't really of any concern in Jamia. Pooja Paswan, pursuing a PhD in Public Administration, says that peers in the University "give you enough space and don't question your choices".

The talking points

Nor is religion the talking point among students. Khalid Jaleel, a very active political science student and editor of jamiajournal.com, says: "Religion is a rarely a topic of discussion. Students are either talking of mundane issues or of things that interest youth — movies, hangouts, studies and world affairs."

Engineering student Ayesha says, "Never in my three years of engineering have we talked religion. It's about films, festivals and food. But yes, my friends do visit me on Eid."

External perceptions often have little or no correlation with the reality within. Miranda says she came to Jamia worried that it would be a "ghetto" but was in for a pleasant surprise. "I have never seen such diversity, and representation from so many backgrounds. I didn't have to change much." Ikramul adds, "Jamia has opened my mind to reasoning. In the madrasah, everything was seen



Power of diversity: (Clockwise) Mohammad Azharuddin, Samreen Mushtaq, Nithya and Miranda Mutuwa



**Commingle perspectives:
(Clockwise)
Ayesha Hussain,
Wasim Hussain,
Pooja Paswan and
Imran Khan**

through the prism of Islam. In my very first class was Prof P.K. Basant, whose lecture I assumed was all wrong! Now I see history in new light.”

Imran Khan and Mohammad Shahid, who belong to Ghazipur and Sultanpur in Uttar Pradesh, respectively, say, “It has never been a religious institution. It’s the media that has created this image. This image needs to be transformed. You’ll meet all sorts of people, with all manner of persuasion. In a Hindi poetry recitation competition even students from Arabic participated. Don’t see Jamia youth

with a different lens.” Like Imran and Mohammad, Saleel Chembayil, a student of Peace and Conflict Resolution, questions the need to see a Jamia student as being distinct or any different. “The Jamia student doesn’t see himself as being distinct. If others do, there’s a need to introspect at societal level,” Chembayil argues.

Faith in institutions

A common strand among all students is a strong faith in secularism of the country. Azharuddin has a strong belief that an individual can lead a life of dignity and fulfilment based on his achievements: “I don’t think religion will impact career prospects. Ours is a secular nation with a secular agenda. In the private sector, they will not go by my religion but how I do my job.”

Other students too reiterate their faith in the principles of secularism and the composite culture of the country and assert their ability to contribute towards nation building. Farha Bano says, “Muslims are contributing their mite in every field, be it in the sciences, education, cinema, sport or business.” Talha says members of different communities should have greater interaction to understand each other better.

Clash of worldviews

However, there are misgivings among Jamia’s students with reference to the conflict between the West and Islam. The ban on the burqa and naqab in the West does evoke anger. Khalid says there is a “feeling of siege and of victimisation by the West”.

Farha Bano wonders how the burqa can be a hindrance to work: “The burqa doesn’t restrict. I have a friend who works in a BPO in a burqa.”

Unity in diversity

One common thread that, however, cuts through all the differences or divergences lies outside the domain of the serious. The month of February unites Jamia in a common love for fun and food. A guitar session on the lawns outside the new library building; the mellifluous notes of a mouth organ filling the air near Hygienic Café; a stylish lad imitating a perfect cricket shot at Castro Café; the general banter at the café; fashionable ‘divas’ donning the choicest of accessories mingling with their buddies in hijab there; groups of boys and girls discussing Kareena Kapoor and Katrina Kaif...

Differences, diversities or perceptions, Jamia is truly a mini-India in motion. ♦

Reimagining multiculturalism

Two Jamia students bag top honours in an essay competition and visit UK for a study tour

The two seem worlds apart. He's outspoken and she's given to few words. Yet both Saleel Chembayil, an MA Final student of Conflict Analysis and Peace Building, and Talha Rehman, a MA Previous student in Islamic Studies, with their individual strengths, emerged winners of an essay-writing competition jointly organised by the British High Commission and Jamia Millia Islamia. The theme of the competition was 'What are the ties that bind a multicultural society?'

To Saleel, a society should be like a salad bowl rather than a melting pot, wherein "one integrates oneself with the larger entity without losing one's identity and one's cultural flavour". India, he says, exemplifies such a definition. This form of multiculturalism can be secured through "constitutional mechanisms and fair representation for different communities, so that each citizen gets equal opportunities", he says. At the same time, society and individuals must "acknowledge differences in perception", Chembayil adds.

At the moment, however, he feels saddened by what he calls the "hijacking of democracy by mobocracy" and violent mobs reordering "our core values and agenda". The topic of the essay was close to his heart and his preparations were made easy by the fact that multiculturalism forms part of his course.

On her part, Talha feels that there is a need to "protect the minorities". "It's the State's responsibility to preserve harmony. Yet, at the same time, the minorities must ensure that they are loyal to the country they live in," she says. For her essay, Talha relied on books available on the internet. In particular, she



Envisioning an integrationist yet diverse body polity: Talha (above) and Saleel (below)

carried out a detailed reading of *Political Theories* by Andrew Heywood. The competition was open for both undergraduate and postgraduate students of Jamia. Participants were expected to write a 1,500-2,000 word essay in English on the spot. Fifty-five students participated in the competition. They subsequently made an oral presentation in English, of five minutes each, based on their written work.

Saleel, a graduate in Commerce from the University of Calicut, Kerala, had joined an American multinational, before joining the Conflict Analysis Programme. "I am passionate about international politics. I intend to pursue a PhD after this and continue in academics."

Talha did her schooling from City Montessori, Lucknow, and a BA as a private candidate from Jamia.

As a regular student of Jamia now, she feels "at home".

As their prize, the two won a one-week study tour to the UK in February, fully sponsored by the British High Commission. ♦





Decoding human life

Jamia students get awards for best presentations at international conference



Wajihul Hasan Khan (R) receiving the prize

The Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Basic Science (CIRBSc), Jamia Millia Islamia, organised an 'International Interdisciplinary Science Conference on Bioinformatics: An interface between Computer Science and Biology' from November 15-17, 2011.

There were 21 invited talks delivered by well-known scientists from India and from countries, such as Singapore, Iraq, South Africa, France,

Japan and South Korea, among a host of others. Student participants made over 30 oral presentations. Nearly 160 papers were delivered in the form of posters.

The organisers had also arranged for the 'Best Oral' and 'Best Poster' awards to create a challenging atmosphere and provoke intense scientific discussions during the conference.

The award for the best oral presentation was given to Syed Ausaf Ali, a PhD student of CIRBSc. The best poster award went to Wajihul Hasan Khan of the same centre.

Ausaf's presentation was titled 'Predicting the Stability of Protein Using its Atomic Coordinates in Protein Data Bank (PDB)'. His work would help in understanding diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and Prion. His work is computational in nature and does not employ any 'wet lab' research tool.

Wajihul presented a poster on 'Cloning and Expression of Codon Optimised Trans-Membrane G Protein Gene of Group B Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) in Mammalian Cells'. Wajihul's work focuses on the development of vaccine against the lately circulating strain of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). The RSV is an important viral pathogen of the respiratory tract. ♦

Another feather in her cap

Jamia student Poonam Singh wins an award at an international conference in the US

Poonam Singh, a research scholar at the Department of Biosciences, Jamia Millia Islamia, has bagged an award for the 'Best Poster' at an international conference held recently in the United States.

Two research scholars from the Department of Biosciences Asim Azhar and Poonam Singh were selected out of several other scholars from across the world to present their work on 'Protein Conformation and Enzymology' at the recently organised '6th International Symposium on the



Chemistry and Biology of Serpins' at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, USA which was held from October 23-26, 2011.

The conference was organised by the Department of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine, the School of Medicine at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Poonam had earlier won the A.R. Gopala Ayengar Best Poster Award at the Asian Biophysics Association International Conference too. ♦

‘Take charge of education’

Aftab Ahmad wants his peers to take up the cause of education for the national good

Aftab Ahmad hails from Maner, 30 km from Patna, the capital city of Bihar. Literacy is abysmal in Maner. Therefore, when he did his MA in Urdu from JNU, enrolled for an MPhil at Jamia, and secured admission to Jamia’s BEd programme, the objective was “to go back to his native village as a teacher”. Aftab says, “I want to serve my community. I have a dream of a literate India. Without education there is no identity.” It was with a similar zeal that he participated in and won the third prize in an All-India Essay Writing Competition organised by Al-Hikma Foundation Society recently. The topic of the essay was ‘Human Welfare: Needs and relevance’. Needless to say, he emphasised the need to prioritise education. “Education programmes must serve society... The Right to Education won’t be fulfilled until each one of us takes charge of educating others. By taking the onus upon ourselves we will be giving to the nation responsible citizens,” he says.

Aftab, who made it through UGC-NET and has secured a JRF (Junior Research Fellowship), says he’s the first person from his village to have entered the portals of JNU. At Jamia, he’s the student editor of *Taleem* magazine. He also has a regular column in *Al-Misbaah* magazine. Aftab has also written for *The Sunday Indian*.



Presently, he is on a break from his MPhil course, which he plans to pursue after he completes a BEd. For the moment, though, he plans to savour the prize money of ₹3,000 that he won in the competition. ♦

Sports stars



Jamia’s hockey team has won the All-India Inter-Varsity Tournament, held in Delhi. This was the first time Jamia had won this laurel. In the Inter-Varsity Wrestling Tournament, Jamia’s wrestler Vikram got a bronze, first medal for Jamia since 1974. In tennis, Parul Goswami and Monica Menon helped the University emerge runners-up in the North-East Zone. ♦

A conference in Iran

Malike Ashter, an MA Final Year student participated in an international conference on ‘Youth and Islamic Awakening’ held in Tehran (Iran) from January 29-30, 2012. The conference was organised by the World Assembly of Islamic Awakening, Iran.



Rites of passage

Premchand wrote his iconic last work *Kafan* overnight during his stay at Jamia in 1935

Prof Abdul Bismillah

Premchand, the doyen of Indian literature, has enriched the world of both Hindi and Urdu. Most of his works were originally in Urdu, which he himself translated into Hindi, or asked his close friends to do so. At other times, he himself wrote the Hindi version afresh for his Hindi readers, even changing the setting and names while keeping his readership in mind. In fact, sometimes he would even change the story ending!

However, Premchand's last story *Kafan* falls in a different category altogether. Originally written in Urdu, the Hindi translation was done by a novice who did not quite understand Premchand. A 'Himalayan blunder' is how I call the departures in the Hindi translation.

'Exclusive piece'

The setting for writing the story was Jamia Millia Islamia. Premchand wrote

this work overnight, during a visit to Jamia in 1935. That was the time when the present campus was coming up, but we are not certain whether he stayed at the Karol Bagh campus or the present campus. In fact, Premchand does talk about the raising of the new Jamia campus as early as 1932, when he wrote about the University in a Jamia Report: "Jamia has now acquired a 250-acre land in Okhla, seven miles from Delhi, where its own school buildings will come up."

During his Jamia stay, one of the people Premchand met was the editor of *Risala Jamia* Prof Mohammad Aqil. Prof Aqil had donated his entire property to Jamia, in return for which Jamia had arranged for his boarding and lodging on the campus even after he had retired. It was my fortune that when I joined Jamia, Prof Aqil was still alive. It was he who narrated the details of Premchand's visit to me. Prof Aqil told me that he requested Premchand to write a story for *Risala Jamia* during that visit and how the great man readily agreed to do so. He wrote the story by night and handed it to Prof Aqil the next morning, before leaving for Banaras. This was published in *Risala Jamia's* December 1935 issue. Premchand passed away in August 1936.

The departures

The Hindi translation had been published



A copy of *Jamia*, published in December 1935, which carried 'Kafan', written in Urdu. This copy is available at the Jamia library

in *Chaand* in April 1936. How did the anomalies escape Premchand's attention? Could it have been because he was too unwell by then? Or was it that he did not exactly remember all the details of his hurriedly written Urdu story? Also, did he, in the first place, give his consent to the translator?

It's natural for a few discrepancies to creep in when a work is translated. But this is not the case in the translation of works between Urdu and Hindi, as Hindi readers understand Urdu too. Thus, rather than translation, it's only a change of

Prof Aqil told me that he requested Premchand to write a story for *Risala Jamia...* and that the great man readily agreed...



script that we witness. But in *Kafan*, the translator changed the context, interpreted the turn of phrases wrongly, translated where no translation was required, and introduced corrections that were not necessary. For example, *naujawan* is a word which a Hindi reader understands. What was the need to make it *jawan*? The characters in the story are village folks and although in Urdu, Madhav and Madho are written the same way, one supposes Premchand would have meant 'Madho' and not 'Madhav'. And 'Madho' would have used words like *bedarad* rather than *bedard* (heart-

less), *hirday* rather than *hriday* (heart).

I have described in detail the anomalies, in my book *Vimarsh Ke Aayaam* (Anang Prakashan, 2006, pp 65-75). What is disturbing, however, is that no effort has been made to correct these departures and introduce the original version to the reader.

— Professor Abdul Bismillah is Head,
Department of Hindi, Faculty of
Humanities and
Languages, Jamia Millia Islamia.

Chronicler of history

While Premchand's writings mirror the society of pre-Independent India, the writer was tuned in to the political awakening of the times too. Mahatma Gandhi and his thoughts were dear to him; it was perhaps at Gandhi's behest that Premchand had visited Jamia in 1935. In fact, he travelled to Jamia after having visited Gandhi's Wardha Ashram. But even before that, in 1932, Prem-

chand had commended the people associated with Jamia for their "self-less work". Describing the financial difficulties Jamia had to face right since inception, Premchand writes that as the financial assistance that the princely estates originally extended to Jamia dried up, the institution survived on individual acts of kindness. "Despite these hardships, the teachers, surviving on meager resources, persisted with their work.

Each of them is so capable, that they could have easily got a job in a reputed organisation but they chose not to leave Jamia." Premchand calls this a "missionary zeal" and adds, "We do not find a trace here of the tendency that we notice among Muslims today — that of expecting government assistance for everything." Premchand wrote this was the best example of self-confidence, self-sufficiency and patriotism.



A musical knot

Three decades after their inter-faith marriage, Amita and Mohammad Shamim remember how Jamia played the perfect setting to their coming together

The year was 1975. Third-year BA student Mohammad Shamim was travelling to Jamia in a bus when he spotted a damsel in distress. Seated next to her were, Shamim imagined, her parents. Shamim was perplexed. At the bus stop close to Jamia, when the family too got down, Shamim accosted them.

The girl's father, dreaming about a secure teaching future for his daughter, wanted her to join Jamia's BA programme. Now that would make her an internal candidate of Jamia and make it easy for her to gain admission to the prestigious BEd programme later on. But the girl – Amita – was reluctant as it was a 'Muslim' institution.

Upset by the tag, Shamim got into counselling mode, tried to reason out with Amita that the ratio of Muslims to non-Muslims in Jamia was 40:60, and when Amita wouldn't listen, took her straight to his Dean. The Dean finally managed to convince her. Thus began Amita's journey in Jamia, with Shamim ever-willing to play Man Friday to her.

Amita quickly took a liking to Jamia. Aided by

Shamim, she mastered her Urdu diction, became the darling of the Urdu faculty and went on to win the inter-university ghazal competition three years in a row.

While these accomplishments confirmed her credentials as a student, a duet that Amita and Shamim sang on the campus – *Abhi na jao chhod kar* – sealed their status as more than just friends. In fact, to give Amita company, Shamim joined the MA Urdu programme, although he had no academic interest then.

The two recount how everyone on the campus, right from the Dean to the *canteen-wallah* to the guards fanned this special relationship, to the point of warning them that this bond had better result in marriage. Shamim says, "The guards would look the other way when we strolled on the lawns."

Only, the two families were oblivious of, or in denial mode about, the exact nature of this 'friendship'. By then though Amita and Shamim had become regular features at each other's homes. By the time the families came to know, the two had already preempted them and went in for a court marriage. What followed was a leaf out of any Hindi movie – threats, attempts at bribing the groom, and an unfortunate parting of ways between Amita and her family.

Amita retains her Hindu name, but her extended in-laws' clan can't do without her. She nursed her mother-in-law during a prolonged fight against cancer. In fact, she is integral to Shamim's family.

While Shamim is a programme officer at the Urdu Academy, Amita fulfilled her father's wish that his daughter become a teacher. She's now a teacher at Amar Jyoti Charitable Trust, Delhi, and teaches differently-abled children.

And for fulfilling their lives' ambition in more ways than they could have ever imagined, Jamia remains closest to their heart. "We need the slightest pretext to rush to Jamia. Even a birthday party of a friend's grandson will do." ♦





In the land of revolution

Professor Anisur Rahman, Faculty at the Department of English, Jamia, visited Cairo to deliver two talks on Tagore’s poetry and thought



Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), like other creative artists, was no philosopher as such but was one of a kind, an intellectual major, who reflected profoundly on the spiritual aspects of life in *Sadhana* (1913) and *The Religion of Man* (1937), two of his more powerful discourses on divinity, spirituality, and man’s place in the larger design of Being. Drawing upon the concept of Brahma as the absolute truth, he examined the nature of good and evil, beauty and ugliness. This was an understanding of the phenomenon

that while facts were many, truth was only one, and that truth was Brahma.”

This was Professor Anisur Rahman, Department of English, speaking to an Egyptian audience at a lecture on “Rabindranath Tagore: Perspectives on his Life and Times”, delivered at the Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture, Cairo, Egypt. He delivered two talks on Tagore’s poetry and thought, both of which were sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Government of Egypt, and the Embassy of India in Egypt.

Prof Rahman probed Tagore’s views on politics, society, education and even women. During his interaction with his Egyptian audience, he found them to be inquisitive and enthusiastic about the iconic Indian poet.

In his other lecture, sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Prof Rahman made a comparative study of Tagore and Arabic poet Ahmed Shawqi in order to contextualise Tagore for people outside India and to lend him contemporary relevance. ♦

Book release

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh recently released a book titled *Romancing Tagore*, which is an Urdu poetic transcreation of Rabindranath Tagore’s works. The book has been jointly produced by Dr. Rehman Musawwir,



Assistant Professor, Department of Hindi, Jamia Millia Islamia, and Indira Varma.

On the occasion, Dr. Singh said that rendering Tagore’s works into Urdu will enrich the existing rich tradition of Urdu. Dr. Musawwir said that transcreating Tagore’s poetry was a challenging task but equally rewarding.

Minister of State for Planning, Science & Technology and Earth Sciences Dr. Ashwani Kumar was also present on the occasion.

On-board IEEE

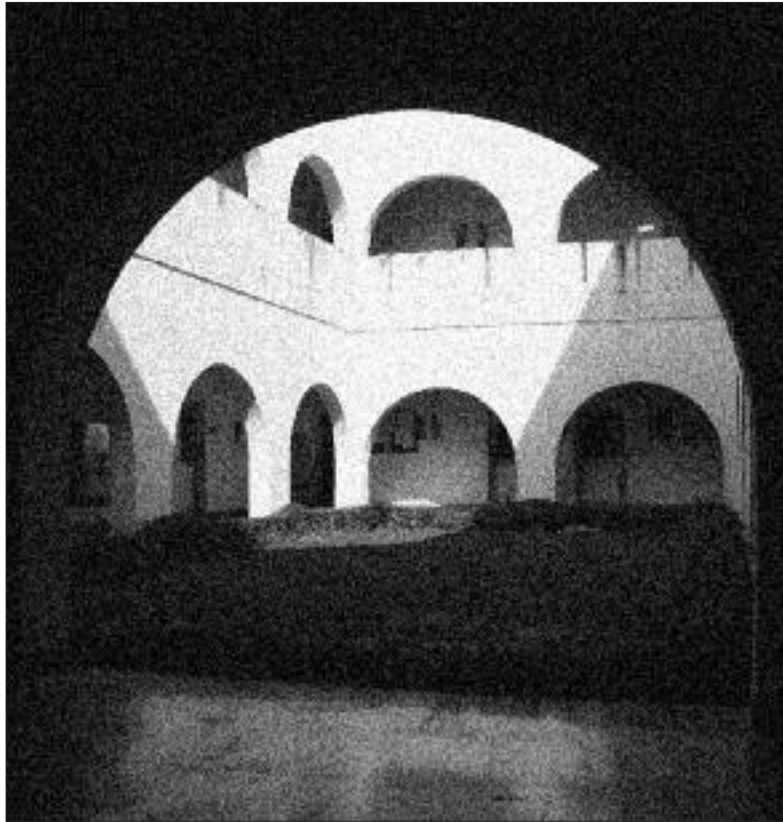
Prof Mini Shaji Thomas, Professor of Electrical Engineering, Jamia Millia Islamia, has been nominated to two boards of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) for 2012. Prof Thomas will serve as the Chair of IEEE-Educational Activities Board (EAB) Section Outreach Committee and as a board member of EAB. The EAB recommends policies on educational matters and implements programmes specifically intended to serve the educational pursuits of IEEE members, the engineering and scientific communities, and members of



the general public, and continuing education products/activities and accreditation.

Prof Thomas will also serve as a board member of the IEEE Publication Services and Products Board (PSPB) in 2012 as Member and Geographic Activities Board (MGAB) liaison. The PSPB proposes policies, criteria and procedures regarding all IEEE publications and related products and services, IEEE being the major publisher of technical research literature. IEEE’s publications are highly cited, running into 31,30,000 documents and growing. ♦

India Arab Cultural Centre



A path through a small wood on the Jamia campus leads us to the India Arab Cultural Centre, designed by architect A.G. Krishna Menon. The building, inaugurated in June 2009, represents a fusion of Indian and Arab aesthetics, its high point being a screen that greets you as you enter the reception area. While the outer facade is a graceful combination of gray and red, the white arches leading to a sunny central courtyard reflect architectural elements of traditional Indian homes. Complementing these architectural patterns is a rich collection of paintings from the Arab world, displayed in the corridors.



Jamia Millia Islamia

Maulana Mohamed Ali Jauhar Marg, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi - 110025

EPABX: +91(11)26981717, 26988044, 26984075, 26985176

Website: www.jmi.ac.in