

Day-Long National Conference
on
Echoes of Tradition and Voices of Change: Mapping the Future of
Arab-Islamic Culture

Tuesday, March 10, 2026, India Arab Cultural Centre, JMI

Culture is not a fixed or monolithic category, but one constantly shaped, disrupted, and reconfigured across time, space, and socio-political forces. Arab identity and culture have never been uniform; they have been profoundly influenced by internal dynamics (such as evolving intellectual debates, religious interpretations, and literary movements) and external pressures (including colonialism, Orientalism, globalization, and geopolitical interventions). This symposium seeks to interrogate these processes of continuity and rupture in the Arab cultural realm, particularly in the turbulent 21st century. Scholars have long cautioned against essentializing Arab culture as static or homogeneous. Treating it as a fixed entity risks overlooking its fluidity and the ways it adapts and refuses. A key contribution to this understanding comes from Joseph Massad's influential work, particularly in *Desiring Arabs* (2007), where he traces how Arab representations of identity—including aspects of sexuality, desire, and cultural heritage—have been constructed over time. Massad demonstrates how colonial legacies and Western discourses have intersected with Arab intellectual traditions to shape modern notions of Arab selfhood.

The 21st century has intensified cultural transformations in the Arab world. Recent events marked by constant wars, popular rebellions, resistance movements, and profound political upheavals has reshaped cultural landscapes. The Arab Spring ignited hopes for democratic renewal across Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and beyond, but often led to counter-revolutions, civil strife, or authoritarian restoration. The Syrian Civil War has caused unprecedented destruction, while the Palestinian struggle including cycles of resistance, occupation, and conflict continues to symbolize broader Arab experiences of dispossession and resilience. These events have been aggravated by foreign interventions, economic crises, and sectarian tensions, creating environments of profound instability. Central to cultural change

are the human costs: migration, forced displacement, and loss of lives. Millions have been displaced, most notably from Syria, but also from Iraq, Yemen, Libya, and Palestine. These movements have disrupted traditional social and cultural aspects, family structures, and communal identities, while simultaneously producing new cultural expressions in diaspora communities. Migrants and refugees negotiate belonging in host societies, preserve their heritage through art and memory, and sometimes challenge or reinvent cultural norms in exile. Themes of grief, memory, resilience, and adaptation emerge prominently in literature, visual arts, music, and digital media produced in these contexts. This symposium aims to bring clarity to these ongoing cultural continuities and ruptures by bringing experts from diverse disciplines. Through discussions, it will enlighten students, researchers, and the broader academic community on the evolving dynamics of Arab cultural realms amid crisis and change.

Key Themes:

- Capital and Cultural Economy
- Religion, Reform and Modernity
- Language and Literature
- Technology and Cultural Transformation
- Arab Spring and Democratic Aspirations
- Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Arab World

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.

Abstract Submission: Participants are required to submit **abstract of 250–300 words**, words clearly outlining the research topic, objectives, methodology, conceptual or theoretical framework (where applicable), and the main arguments or findings.

Deadline

Abstract submission: February 28, 2026

Full Paper Submission: March 07, 2026

Full Papers of 5000-6000 words must conform to standard academic conventions, including in-text citations and references. The **latest APA citation style** is preferred.

- **Mode of submission:** Abstracts and papers should be submitted via email to ahsraza@jmi.ac.in

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