

‘Sufi ideas and practices offer a lot to resolve the present challenges’,

Dr. Arabella Bhutto, Vice Chancellor of the University of Sufism and Modern Sciences, Bhitshah.

Today, (August 1, 2024) under the banner of the Center of Sufi Studies, Research, and Publication (CSSRP), the University of Sufism and Modern Sciences held a one-day seminar titled ‘The Essence and Evolution of Sufism: From Spiritual Mysticism to Modern Relevance’. The speaker of the day was Sufi Master Khadim Dahot, and the session was presided over by Professor Dr. Arabella Bhutto, the vice chancellor of the University of Sufism and Modern Sciences, Bhitshah. Mr. Atta Muhammad Chopan (ORIC) handled the proceedings of the session. The session was opened with the citation of the Holy Quran; afterwards, he invited Dr. Zaffar Junejo to welcome and introduce Khadim Dahot; and appraise the audience about the upcoming events of the CSSRP. Dr. Junejo welcomed the scholar and stated that this seminar will be led by Dr. Khadim H. Dahot, ‘Khaliq.’ He told that Dr. Dahot is a well-known social activist, writer, and Sufi poet. He has edited and compiled the works of many Sufi poets and saints of Sindh. Recently, he has authored the ‘Dictionary of Indus Sufis and Saints.’ Additionally, he is a practising Sufi master and is affiliated with the Sufi orders of Qadria, Mawlawiyya (whirling dervish), Siddiqia, and Sannyasi. Then he rolled out the plan for the CSSRP. He said that in the future, the CSSRP will carry out its activities in these areas: research, publications, academic engagement (short courses, workshops, seminars, and webinars), and intellectual mentoring (building and nurturing the academic community). He elaborated on each point and described the activities of each section.

Afterwards, Atta Muhammad invited Kadim Dahot to deliver his talk. Mr. Dahot elaborated in detail that Sufism, or Tasawwuf, is a profound spiritual and mystical tradition within the broader context of Islam. Originating in the 8th century, Sufism has a rich history and a diverse array of practices and beliefs that have evolved over time. At its core, Sufism emphasizes the direct, personal experience of the divine through practices of self-disclosure, introspection, and the cultivation of a deep, loving relationship with the divine. He added that the key principles of Sufism include the remembrance of God (Zikir), the use of spiritual music and dance (Sama) as a means of spiritual expression and contemplation, and the central role of the Sufi master (Murshid), who guides the disciple (Murid) along the spiritual path. Sufism is organised into distinct orders, or Tariqas, each with their own lineages, practices, and spiritual emphases. Additionally, he said that the major Sufi orders include the Qadiriyya, Naqshbandiyya, Chishtiyya, Qalandariya, Mawlawiyya, and Suhrawardiyya, which, while sharing common roots, exhibit both differences and similarities in their approaches. In another bent of mind, he said that Sufi literature and poetry have played a crucial role in shaping and expressing the tradition's spiritual and mystical dimensions. The works of renowned Sufi poets such as Rumi, Hafez, Ibn Arabi, and Bulleh Shah, Shah Abdul Latif, Sachal, Sami, and Bedal are revered for their profound insights into the nature of the divine, the human condition, and the path of spiritual transformation. He concluded that Sufi saints and their contributions have had a significant

impact on the broader Muslim community, both in terms of their spiritual teachings and their engagement with social justice causes.

In questions and Answers session Dr. Akhtiar Ali (Department of Business Administration and Commerce) raised the point that what are Sufi techniques and tools that could be used as practices in business and management subjects? Mr. Dahot said that some stress management techniques could be applied to the practitioners of business and trading community. Again, another faculty member, Dr. Qamar Mahar (Department of Business Administration and Commerce) also asked questions about the relationship between Sufism and Islam. Dahot responded that the relationship between Sufism and mainstream Islam is complex, as Sufis often interpret Islamic teachings and the Quran through the lens of mysticism and pantheism, which can sometimes be at odds with more orthodox interpretations. In the same session, Mr. Anees Muhammad Jamali asked about the limit of questioning in Sufi tradition/Islam. Dahot responded that according to Sufi tradition, there is no limit, ban, or even discouragement on asking questions, even speculating, or imagining is allowed.

Professor Dr. Arabella Bhutto's closing remarks astutely capture the essence of Sufism's enduring significance, situating the tradition within the broader human search for meaning, transcendence, and connection with the divine. She added that Sufism continues to resonate with the universal human quest for meaning, transcendence, and the profound experience of the divine. She added that in an age marked by increasing complexity and fragmentation, the enduring relevance of Sufism offers a compelling invitation to explore the depths of the human spirit and the boundless horizons of the sacred. She further added that objective of this university to add new meanings in the literature of Sufism and blend it with modern science techniques. She emphasised that at USMS, our objective is to opt for multidisciplinary approach and try to learn lessons from Sufism for disciplines including IT, education and business management. She added that we want to learn ethical practices and humanity from poems of Sufis and convert those lessons to the visual art, mathematics and science to communicate to our generation today.

Finally, Dr. Zaffar Junejo thanked all participants and ended the session by thanking the vice chancellor, the faculty members, and the students.

Report by: Dr. Zaffar Junejo (CSSRP) and Atta Muhammad Chopan (ORIC)



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