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Saturday, 24 November 2012, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

T-2, IIIrd Floor, Conference Hall

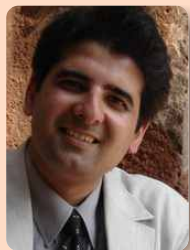
O.P. Jindal Global University

Sonipat Narela Road, Near Jagdishpur Village, Sonipat, Haryana - 131001



Jindal School of International Affairs
India's First Global Policy School

The Impact of the Arab-Israel conflict on South Asian Muslim Attitudes towards Jews and How it influences the Foreign Policy in South Asia



SPEAKER

DR. NAVRAS JAAT AAFREEDI

*Gautam Buddha University
Greater Noida*

Dr. Navras Jaat Aafreedi, An Assistant Professor and Postgraduate Programme Coordinator of the Department of History & Civilization at the School of Humanities & Social Sciences, Gautam Buddha University, Greater NOIDA, and author of the e-book (CD-Rom) *The Indian Jewry and the Self-Professed 'Lost Tribes of Israel' in India*, Mumbai, 2006, which embodies his doctoral thesis, 1978 born, Dr. Navras Jaat Aafreedi is a Researcher in Indo-Judaic Studies and sits on the editorial board of the Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies and the international advisory board of the Asian Jewish Life. Besides being a member of the Board of Studies of the School of Humanities & Social Sciences he is also a member of the Cultural-Council of Gautam Buddha University.

He has held fellowships at Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel; Centre for Communication & Development Studies, Pune, India; and Woolf Institute, Cambridge, UK. His lectures have been well appreciated in the US, the UK, Israel and India. He is the first person to make any worthwhile contributions to Jewish Studies in the Urdu language, the *lingua franca* of almost all South Asian Muslims, though he primarily writes in English and Hindi. He has been studying Muslim-Jewish relations for a number of years and has been consistently working for their betterment.

Abstract

In spite of the fact that South Asia has had resident Jewish communities for more than two millennia, most of the South Asians, including Muslims, have never had any interaction with Jews, because of their small numbers. As of now, according to official sources, the only country in South Asia to have Jews is India. In 2002, the Jewish population was estimated to be 5,300 in India's total population of 1.1 billion. A decade later the number remains more or less the same. Hence, Jews are generally known to South Asians via a secondary source, for instance, the Bible, European fiction, etc., and in the case of Muslims, the Qur'an, and not as a result of direct contact. The South Asian Muslim perceptions of Jews are formed by negative interpretations of the Qur'anic references to Jews, literal interpretations of the polemics in the Qur'an and also by their press. But without doubt the single biggest influence is the Arab-Israel conflict which has a very detrimental effect on the Muslim perceptions of Jews, Israel and Zionism, but interestingly fails to leave any impact on Jewish-Muslim relations in India wherever the two are in direct contact, for instance in the cities of Mumbai and Kolkata, unlike Karachi in Pakistan, where they were attacked in retaliation to the establishment of the modern Jewish state of Israel in 1948 and also during the Arab-Israel wars that followed in 1956 and 1967. The latest major case of the Arab-Israel conflict induced anti-Semitism in Pakistan was the murder of Daniel Pearl in 2002. Personal acquaintance with Jews does not leave any room for negative stereotypes of them among Indian Muslims.

During the recent years there have been attacks on Jews in India too, but all by foreigners, for instance the abduction of Israeli tourists in Kashmir in 1991, the attack on the Chabad House in Mumbai in 2008, the bomb explosion at the German Bakery in Pune, very close to a synagogue, in 2010, and the bomb attack on Tal Yehoshua, an Israeli diplomat's wife in New Delhi in 2012. The last attack happened with the alleged assistance of an Indian Muslim journalist, which gives a hint of the general South Asian Muslim attitude towards Jews and Israel. Kumaraswamy, widely acknowledged as an authority on Indo-Israel relations is of the view that the Indian Muslim attitudes were far more influential than anything else in keeping India from having full diplomatic relations with Israel for the first four decades of the Jewish state's existence. Pakistan and Bangladesh still do not have diplomatic ties with Israel.

RSVP: MS. KAVITA GERA; kgera@jgu.edu.in; 08930110757



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