

accompanied and greeted by friends old and new wherever she went. She passed away on 12 June 2016. ✨

DOI:[10.1017/rms.2016.137](https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2016.137)

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### **Syed Mohammad Yunus Jaffery** **1930–2016**

**Dr.** Yunus Jaffery, distinguished Persian scholar and teacher and a living legend of old Delhi, died on Monday, August 29 at the age of 86 after a short stay at Apollo Hospital, Delhi, surrounded by his nephew Faridun, his niece Simin and other family members. An authority on Delhi and Indo–Persian literature and author of influential text editions of Persian historians and poets who wrote during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan (1628–58), Dr. Jaffery taught Persian at the Anglo-Arabic School of Zakir Husain College (previously Delhi College) until his retirement in 1995. His room, his hujra in the historical building of the madrasa of Ghaziuddin in which the Anglo-Arabic School is situated outside Ajmeri Gate became a place of pilgrimage for an international community of scholars, writers, students, and journalists who sought to study classical Persian, acquire knowledge on the history and culture of old Delhi and the Mughals, sought a rare publication in his library, or who just wanted to meet the famous Dr. Jaffery, who had been the guide of William Dalrymple to his “City of Djinns.”

Dr. Jaffery was born on 27 September 1930 in his family house at Ganj Mir Khan near the Turkman Gate of old Delhi where he lived throughout his life. His father Syed Mohammad Faruq, who worked at a printing press in Paharganj, came from an eminent family: his ancestors were Persian teachers to the Mughal princes at the Red Fort. After Dr. Jaffery finished school he continued with higher studies at Delhi College where in 1958 he obtained his Master of Arts in Persian and was appointed a Lecturer of Persian. In 1962 during the government of the last Shah he went to Iran to pursue a doctorate in Persian studies from the University of Tehran. He stayed for two and a half years, and did his D. Lit on the Persian poet Sa’ib, one of the poets who came to India during the reign of Shah Jahan. Dr Jaffery remained throughout his life passionately involved with Iran, its literary culture and art. He visited it several times as a guest of the Iranian government or Tehran University and

his last visit was in 2006, when he won The Farabi International Award, a prize given by the Islamic Republic of Iran for outstanding scholars in the Humanities and Islamic Studies. In 2008, he also won the Sa'adi Award from Iran, the Award for Translation Works from the Urdu Academy, Delhi, and the Ghalib Award from the Institute of Ghalib, New Delhi. An issue of the journal *Qand-e Parsi* was dedicated to him and published in 2015 by the Centre for Persian Research, Office of the Cultural Counsellor of the Islamic Republic of Iran, an institution with which he collaborated on many projects of translations and editions of Persian literature with special relevance for India.

During his studies at Teheran he met Manizheh, a fellow student who became the love of his life but whom he could not marry; one of the reasons being his dedication to the education of his sisters whose higher studies he financed against all odds, and, eventually, their weddings. He remained a bachelor throughout his life and continued to look after his extended family. He had high hopes for his niece Nausheen and expected that she would follow in his footsteps as a Mughal scholar but she died tragically of a fatal illness in 2004. Her book *Jahan Ara Begam* was released posthumously in 2011. His nephew Faridun and his wife Shazia looked after him during his last years and he was very fond of their two daughters.

Dr Jaffery wrote numerous articles in Persian, Urdu and in English, he authored translations from Persian to Urdu and from Urdu to Persian, and contributed greatly to making hitherto unpublished Persian poets and historians who wrote during the reign of Shah Jahan accessible through his edition of their works. These include the Persian editions of the *Diwan of Sa'ib-i Tabrizi* (1982 and 2010), *Chahar Chaman* by Chandar Bhan Brahman (2007), *The Shahjahan Nama* by Jalala-i Tabataba'i (2009); and he co-edited and translated with Margrit Pernau *Information and the Public Sphere: Persian Newsletters from Mughal Delhi* (2009).

Fluent in English, Dr. Jaffery assisted many scholars from India and abroad in their work, and this includes myself. He taught me classical Persian when I came to him in September 1976, and introduced me to Persian literature and its intricate metaphors, which he sometimes illustrated with a drawing or acted out in front of my astonished eyes. He was a living example of the adab culture of Delhi, of a bygone age. For forty years he was part of my life as a friend and scholar who assisted me in my study of the historians and poets of Shah Jahan. He was a selfless human being, a true Sufi, dedicated to his own research as much as to the research of those who sought his help. ✂

DOI:10.1017/rms.2016.140

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