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AJMER SHARIF

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Awakening of Sufism in South Asia



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FOREWORD BY *Mehru Jaffer*

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Ajmer Sharif

Awakening of Sufism in South Asia

by
Reema Abbasi

Ajmer Sharif, the heart of homage for thousands of all faiths, welcomes a tidal wave of humanity for the saint known as *Gharib Nawaz* (Benefactor of the Poor), whose spiritual order is the most lyrical and inclusive. This book showcases the absolute necessity of Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti in our conflicted times. Today, he is a signpost of unity; a reminder of the relevance of Sufism as a conduit of harmony and justice. These pages narrate the story of the founder of the Chishti Sufi Order in South Asia—who knew that hunger supersedes doctrines—and of his movement, which began in a mud hut over eight centuries ago.

Muinuddin Chishti brought Qawwali, the genre of Sufi devotional recitals, and the ideal of acceptance to the world. He discouraged religious supremacy and patriarchy by example—his wife was a central leader and his only daughter became a caliph—an aspect practised at his seat, but cast off by other shrines of his lineage.

An elaborately researched oeuvre on the history, spiritual journey, mystical power, and legacy of the 12th century Sufi giant—rich with accounts of Mughals as devotees, monuments, rituals, and over 200 unique, evocative photographs—Ajmer Sharif traces the life of the saint and reveals the living force of his shrine.

An in-depth researched work on the history, spiritual journey and enduring legacy of the Sufi saint Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti.

Describes the life and times of the saint and the continued relevance of his much-visited shrine at Ajmer Sharif.

Features over 200 unique and evocative photographs of the tombs, monuments, rituals and pilgrims at Ajmer Sharif.



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Reema Abbasi was the recipient of the Gender in Journalism Award 2003 from UNESCO for the most gender sensitive reportage. A journalist for 19 years, she began with culture and lifestyle at *The News International*, moved on to crime and socio-political writing with *The Herald* magazine and then became an Assistant Editor and editorial writer at the newspaper *Dawn*.

At present, she is a columnist, and an independent contributor with international newspapers, and a regular commentator on socio-political issues. In the last decade, her writings have maintained a rabid focus on the values of secularism. With her last book *Historic Temples in Pakistan: A Call to Conscience* she aimed to stir a discourse that dispels intolerance towards any faith and shuns the concept of religious power.

She attended Sherborne School for Girls in England and St. Joseph's College in Karachi, Pakistan. Her other passions include travel, arts and culture.

She received the Rajiv Gandhi Award for the literary personality of the year, 2014, at the Fifth Rajiv Gandhi Excellence Awards.