



# **AMI Research Seminars – Autumn 2018**

**Thursdays at 3:00pm | Al-Mahdi Institute**

**Sufyan Abid Dogra, PhD in Anthropology**

**“Karbala in London: Genealogy and Continuity of Contested Expressions of Muharram Rituals among British South Asian Twelver Shia Muslims”**

The roots of the power struggle over authority and recognition among various factions of Twelver Shias of South Asian background living in London revolves around the idea of how the ‘true and authentic’ Shia Islam is practised through Ashura Rituals. The theological and political genealogy of this struggle can be traced by examining the history of Shia Islam in South Asia and by analysing the migration of Shia Muslims from India to Pakistan during 1947 partition of sub-continent, and subsequent migration to Britain from South Asia. This seminar will present the historical analysis and ethnographic accounts on Shia Islam and how it is practised in London. The influence of London based Iranian and Iraqi Shia transnational networks are vital to understand in order to approach the internal groupings of adherents in London based South Asian Hussanias. While some South Asian origin Shias confirm to the Iran-backed reformist versions of globally standardised ritual commemoration of Ashura, others detest this and search for religious reinterpretations that may legitimise their South Asian ways of commemorating the Ashura ritual.

## **Keywords**

Islam in West, Anthropology of Islam, Shia Islamic Reformism, South Asia, Ethnography, Ritual

## **Biography:**

Sufyan Abid is working as a Senior Research Fellow focusing on exploring the role of Islamic Religious Settings in preventing childhood obesity among South Asian children living in the UK. He is involved in a collaborative research activity by a multidisciplinary team of researchers working to find solutions for reducing childhood obesity using Islamic Religious Settings. He is part of conducting a scoping review and systematic mapping, Delphi consensus method, and ethnographic, qualitative and participatory

fieldwork with Muslim community leaders, Imams and parents in Bradford and Birmingham.

Sufyan did his PhD in Anthropology from University of Sussex, UK. His PhD explores Islamic reformism, piety and charity in everyday life of British Muslims. He did two years postdoctoral research work at University of Chester, investigating transnational religious and political networks of minority Muslims in Britain. He taught various courses at University of Sussex and University of Chester.