



A STUDY ON THE HISTORY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS OF A. M. U, ALIGARH WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SIR SYED ACADEMY MUSEUM, A.M.U, ALIGARH

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ABSTRACT

Sir Syed had a vision, a dream i.e. “the educational upliftment of his community”, to bring them from the darkness of superstitions, religious rigidity and casteism into the light of education. For this purpose, Sir Syed does not only face the hardships and demoralization from the authorities but his own community was against his very idea of “English education” which made his struggles harder. Any individual may have crumble from the enormous backlash from everyone, but it only made Sir Syed’s resolve stronger. From the formation of scientific society to the ultimate result of formation of Aligarh Muslim University, the Sir Syed house which later converted into Sir Syed house museum, that house had a long relation with Sir Syed and his dreams and seen a very important aspects of formation stage of Aligarh Muslim University.

INTRODUCTION

The Greek word mouseion primarily was defined as center of learning where statues and other objects dedicated to goddesses (muses) and their art was centered in 9th century B.C. museums from the beginning was a place of philosophical discussion and a place for contemplation. There

are different types of museums like zoological museum, natural history museum, open air museum, biographical museum etc. the types of museums diversified with the passage of time, and many different types of museums opened with unique ideas. The ICOM also changes and added new diameters to the definition of museum from time to time as the role and function of museum diversified.

A biographical museum or personal museum is a museum in which a person resides or has a personal collection and the museum are named after him. Sir Syed academy museum is one such historical place where the founder of Aligarh Muslim University had a residence for a period of time. The house was later used by his son and his wife, which afterwards act as a vice chancellor house for a short period of time. Prof. Iftikhar Alam Khan and Prof Khaleeq Ahmed Nizami who was also the founder of Sir Syed Academy had done extensive research on the history of university and the development of it. The history of Sir Syed house museum is long and intriguing, and to understand it in full measure it is important to know about the man himself who resides in that building and his struggles.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan

Sir Syed was born in Delhi on October 17, 1817. His ancestors belonged to Herat, a city in Afghanistan, they migrated to India during the reign of Akbar the great, (1556-1605) and took services under the Mughals. Prof. K.A. Nizami wrote, “Syed Ahmed Khan belonged to a very distinguished and respectable family of Delhi which traced its genealogy to Imam Husain, the grandson of the prophet (PBUH).

It is hard to describe a personality like sir Syed, he was indeed amongst one of the greatest men who shaped and guided the course of historical development in the Indian subcontinent in the 19th century. He was truly one of the most influential personalities of the 19th century. Sir Syed had many facets of greatness; he was an educationist, a writer, a thinker, a historian, an activist.

The revolt of 1857 played a huge impact on the mind of Sir Syed who not only feel that Muslims are in extremely vulnerable situation, they are also facing the educational and economical decay, and they will continue their downfall if emergency actions are not taken immediately. With this thought in mind he started his educational movement, hence the beginning of Aligarh Movement.

The history and development of museums in AMU, Aligarh in chronological order.

According to Sir Syed the presence of the museum in the educational sphere is very important for aiding students in learning, thus the formation of Nizam Museum and Lytton library (1905). **The Nizam Museum building was completed in the year 1903.** Sir Ziauddin had formed a museum on kindergarten education in the building and collected many valuable specimens for the museum, but due to the lightning striking the museum building (1908), the collection within

the building was lost except a few, later that few remaining collections was placed inside the Sultan Jahan building. (khan, 2010). The building of the Nizam Museum, the first Museum conceived at the time of formation of Mohammadan Anglo Oriental College, becomes just a heritage building with its original content of the building shifted from there to the picture Gallery (art gallery) of the university for a long time. The Moin ud Din Ahmad art gallery building was completed by 1928. A donation of 25,000 rupees was given to the university by the Moin ud Din Ahmad to form a trust for the maintenance of the gallery. He already donated a sum of rupees 7-8 thousand to the university for the art gallery building. Qayam Husain was the first curator of the gallery. The painting collections donated by Moin ud Din are invaluable which consist of some very valuable Italian, French and English oil paintings. The total number of these paintings is 299 in which 261 are oil paintings. The Botany Museum was started in the year 1932 under the chairmanship of Dr. Rafique Ahmad Khan, but took its final form in the Chairmanship of Prof. Kafeel Ahmad Chaudhary. Earlier the collection in the museum is for the educational use of Botany Department. The zoology Museum was built in 1935 by Prof. Babur Mirza who considers museum as effective tools for providing teaching aid and educating and providing knowledge in Animal kingdom. The large collection of Sir Syed's Archeological collection was left on the grounds of Tibbiya college and on the request of Sir Shah Mohammad Sulieman it was placed inside the picture gallery in 1940 and it remain there for a long time. As a result of the great hard work done by Professor Gaur, a museum along with the archeology section was founded in 1950's. The museum was known as the Sir Syed Archaeology Museum. A few geological specimens of rocks, minerals, fossils and display material was kept in a small room called Geological Museum firstly in the Department of Botany and secondly in the Archaeological Art Gallery in the first floor of old A.M.U. Canteen. From Art Gallery the museum was shifted to Geography Department in the year 1957. The museum building was declared open in the year 1961 for educational purposes. The Museums in J. N. Medical college opened in the year 1962 with the Anatomy Museum, Community Medicine Museum and Pathology Museum. The university museum of science and culture was established in 1964 as a part of general education center to provide experimental and object-oriented learning. The first curator of the museum was Mr. Iftikhar Alam Khan. The Ibn-Baytar Advia Museum was established in the year of 1972 under the chairmanship of Hameed Ullah and Prof. Zil-ur-Rehman gave the museum its original form. The Sir Syed Museum was inaugurated on Sir Syed day i.e. 17th October 1999 by Vice Chancellor Mahmood Ur Rahman. The museum does not have much collection to start with, but it was decided to go on with whatever meager collection was in possession and the museum came out as a great tribute to the person it was named after. The art gallery building was renovated and reopened as an art gallery on the eve of Sir Syed Day on 17th October 2013. The Art gallery started to have a permanent painting collection as well as engaged in organizing different seminars and art programmes and events for the young artist. In the year of 2014, when Lt. General (Rtd.) Zameeruddin Shah was the Vice Chancellor, the Sir Syed Collection was shifted from Sir Syed Archeology Museum of Department of History to the

Kennedy Hall Complex as they merge with university museum, and rename the museum as Musa Dakri Museum on the name of its donor. In 2019 the inscription of the Sultan Bilban brings back to the university museum and was displayed in the Sir Syed Gallery of the University Museum.

SIR SYED MUSEUM

Sir Syed Museum was located in the Sir Syed House, the residential place of the founder of university Sir Syed. The house was originally a military mess which was later bought by Sir Syed's son Syed Mahmood in 1876 for his father's residence. Syed Mahmood was the first Indian judge of Allahabad High Court.

It was not clearly mentioned that in which year did the university exactly get the house but according to Mr. Iftikhar Alam in the year 1969-1970 the University gets the full possession of the Sir Syed House. It was decided that the University will celebrate its silver jubilee in 1970 and the renovation of the Sir Syed House was part of it. The new Sir Syed House building was built on the foundation of the old Sir Syed House building with little modifications like the roof of the building was reconstructed in cement and certain partitions in the previous rooms, some windows and door's placement was changed. The full renovation of the house was completed till 1972 and it was later decided to open an Academy in the Sir Syed House in the name of its founder. The Sir Syed Academy was inaugurated on 22nd October, 1974. Late professor Khaliq Ahmad Nizami was the founder of the academy; he poured his whole effort and knowledge into making the Academy fully devoted to the founder.

The rooms in Sir Syed House were already allotted by K. A. Nizami for three different fields: the Directors room, Office room, Archives room, and the designing for the museum were done by Prof. Iftikhar Alam. A Library was decided to open opposite the Archives Room and the large hall is decided to be named as Committee room which will be used for the purpose of seminars and meetings. The rest of the five rooms are decided to be used as Museum setting. The Sir Syed Museum was inaugurated on Sir Syed day i.e. 17th October 1999 by Vice Chancellor Mahmood Ur Rahman. The museum does not have much collection to start with, but it was decided to go on with whatever meager collection was in possession and the museum came out as a great tribute to the person it was named after.

Research Through Innovation



Inside view of the Sir Syed Academy Museum

The entry of the room was decided to be used as the introduction of Sir Syed and had a large portrait of Sir Syed made by a Fine Arts professor Prof. Khaleeq Ashfaq, and the Almira in wall is decided to be used as showcase to show Sir Syed's walking stick. A quote was written below the showcase which is

Hai dileri dast-e arbab-e siyosat ka ata

Another room was dedicated to house the furniture of the Sir Syed. For this purpose, a special platform was made and a carpet was laid on it and the furniture were placed on it. The room also had a shawl of Sir Syed gifted to the museum by his relatives. Another room adjacent to the hall had the portraits of Sir Syed's colleges. The room also had a portrait of Nizam of Hyderabad gifted by Nizam himself. The portrait had a special quality that if we look from any angle of the room, it seems that the Nizam is looking directly at them. There were two table top showcases showing the pictures of Sir Syed, his associates and his sons.



The room of Sir Syed's personal belongings

Another room adjacent to the room where Sir Syed's furniture was on display was Conference room. This hall type room had large table and chairs in 'U' shape to be used in meetings and conferences. The wall had large old photographic pictures of Sir Syed and his associates in large wooden frame. The third gallery in the building had two sections, one section tells the story of Mohammadan Anglo Oriental College in chronological order, and another section had photographs of old buildings of A.M.U. it consists of different documents, maps and pictures related to Sir Syed and A.M.U.

Archive

The archive contains the official record of M.A.O. College and various societies and projects established by Sir Syed. The archive contains a wealth of information but many of them are in very fragile condition and can't be viewed publicly.

Library

A library was also established in the museum where books on Sir Syed, his companions and The Aligarh Movement are provided and it also has a little space for reading them.

Conclusion

It is difficult to understand the hardships and difficulties faced by the Sir Syed in establishing a Muslim university, one can only read about those and imagine them, but to actually face them is entirely a different thing. While learning about the situations of pre- independent India and the 1857 revolt it could be understood that how a person alone is fighting in an India where there is so much resentment and hostility towards the English education because of what the government had done to common people. This museum offers to impart historical knowledge to the students about the founder of the university Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, and how his educational movement led to the formation of the Muslim university.

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