

The History and Development of University Museum of AMU: MUSA DAKRI MUSEUM

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Abstract

Aligarh Muslim University from the time of its origin, consider museum as an integral part of it. With the Jami Masjid, the Strachey hall and other adjacent buildings Sir Syed Ahmad Khan dreamed of an idea of the museum, which ultimately results in Nizam Museum. Overtime with the transformation of college into university, this museum got shifted to a new location and eventually the university developed a central museum in the form of Musa Dakri museum in addition to certain other artifacts .The journey from the Nizam museum to the Musa Dakri Museum has been long and intriguing .

Introduction

The word museum is basically derived from the Greek word, museion which primarily defined as a center of learning and contemplation. Museion was a temple dedicated to goddess muses where people gather for scientific learning and contemplation. The Alexandria museion was an extension of library of Alexandria 3rd century B.C. The primary focus of this institution was teaching for which various objects of art objects, zoological specimen, scientific instruments and artifacts were used. In the later course of history different functions were added and diversified of the museums and library with the result of separation of the two units as an individual institution, with primary focus on the impartment of education, having separate and specific functions. One such institution which comes out of it was universities, which had taken the seat of higher education, in fact the first public museum founded at Basel city (1671) was a university museum.



UNIVERSITY MUSA DAKRI MUSEUM

History and Development of the museum

The building of the Nizam Museum, the first Museum conceived at the time of formation of Mohamman Anglo Oriental College, becomes just a heritage building with its original content of the building shifted from there to the picture Gallery of the university for a long time. The building of the Nizam Museum was installed with inscription on a slab, of sultan Balban which was once a part of the minar was taken down by the Britishers in the year of 1858. The minar was once located in the front of the Jami Masjid of Muhammad shah in the upperkot or upper fort area of Aligarh city. The inscribed stone was first fixed in the Nizam Museum, and was brought by Sir Syed for the museum. This stone slab has now been shifted to the Musa Dakri museum.



Inscription of sultan Bilban

The founder of Aligarh Muslim University, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was himself a great connoisseur of archeological remains and artifacts. Before the archeological survey of India established under General Cunningham, the general himself was very involved in exploring the archeological society, and Sir Syed was a member of it. In the journal of this society he wrote an article on bricks of different ages found at the important archeological site of Hastinapur which was a path breaking article of that time. As a true archeologist of, Sir Syed paid great attention to the detailed recording of epigraphic evidence. Sir Syed recorded the evidences for the utilization of it by the future historians and archeologists. This evidence greatly reflects his historical zeal and archeological spirit. During his stay at Aligarh he carried out large number of explorations and surveys in the neighboring areas of Aligarh and collected many artifacts of historical importance.

During the time of Professor S. Nurul Hasan, when in the department of history the archeological section was formed, one professor was assigned with the task of gathering all the scattered archeological artifact collected by Sir Syed and that was Professor R .C. Gaur. 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.

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 building of the museum is one of the most beautiful buildings designed by a U.S. architect namely Joseph Stone as a part of general education center. The university museum was inaugurated in 1970, it started imparting post Graduate courses in museology since 1978 and in 1988 the department of museology came into existence. The first curator of the museum was Mr. Iftikhar Alam Khan.

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 of science and culture museum. Here since a long period of time a university museum existed which was managed by the Department of Museology. In the July of 2014 a US- based alumni and well-wisher of the university, Mr. Musa Dakri, donated a heavy sum of money i.e. \$50,000. With this money, an idea came to the vice chancellors mind and then he decided to merge the preexisting museum with the Sir Syed Archaeology Museum of Department of history. And that's how the university museum Musa Dakri Museum was came into being.

In 2019 the inscription of the Sultan Bilban brings back to the museum and was displayed in the Sir Syed Gallery of the Museum. Today the museum is divided into five sections.

The science and natural history gallery:

This gallery is mostly taken over by replicas and models, and is divided into following:



The botanical collection

It includes objects like male cone of Cycas ,Rum Phil, The Female cone of Cedrus Deodara, Impression of fossils , impression of Fern Foliage ,Female of Picea, Carboniferous(350-255 million years ago

The zoological collection

It includes Alizarin mount of frog, embryo of the rabbit, A Hippocampus, skull of a snake, Fossil of corals, Fossil of worms, Fossil of crinoids, Fossil of sponges and Fossil of mammals etc.

The Geological collections molar of Dinosaurs, calcite, Cavan site, Barite and Orthoclase, etc.

History of Aligarh Gallery

This gallery includes copies of documents, rare photographs and miscellaneous items which throw light on the establishment of MAO College. Some other items are also displayed there.

Sir Syed Gallery

On ground floor a room is dedicated to all the sculptural pieces and artifacts collected by Sir Syed from the areas around Aligarh district, popularly known as the Sir Syed collection, it includes the object of antiquities and archeological objects like some stone sculptures, carved stone pieces, doorjambs and concrete panels, the collection is dated from 1st century A.D. to 11th Century A.D.

R.C.Gaur Gallery of Archaeology: On the first floor, the large galleries are devoted to the archaeological artifacts and relics discovered and found during various excavations and explorations conducted by the archaeologists of the Department of History Prof. R.C.Gaur and Nurul Hasan.

The major sites from where the relics are displayed are Atranjikhera and Jhakera. The important collections of this section are:

- I. Acheulian tools: The collection consists of hand axes, picks, Cleavers, Scrapers, Flakes, Choppers, Discoid and Nodules.

- II. Stone Sculptures and Terracotta Figurines: the artefacts were collected from the area of western Uttar Pradesh namely Aligarh, Etah, Farrukhabad, Meerut, Moradabad, Hathras, Muzaffarnagar and Bulandshahr etc.

- **Gallery of medieval Archaeology**

A room on the first floor has been dedicated to display objects from medieval period, though this gallery is meant for temporary displays, some are found during excavations at Fatehpur Sikri which includes jars, pottery shards, decorated tiles, vials, perfume bottles and coins are on permanent display.

In addition to the Sir Syed Collection the proudest collection of the museum includes some Mauryan and Post Mauryan Brahmi terracotta seal, and an original victorian clock. On ground floor galleries there are some miscellaneous items like some medieval dress material like Angharkhass, some Dioramas presenting animal and marine life. In the collection there are some rare medallions, crockery sets donated by various patrons.



Collection of daggers



Angharkha



Diorama depicting life of Antarctica

Significance of Musa Dakri museum

This beautiful building is situated at the center of the university campus, thus making it in easy reach of university students. The university museum is intended to supplement the teachings, besides it imparts general education to the school going children and the local community. The museum possesses a large number of rare collections of which are varied in nature. The museums are centers filled with information designed to enlighten and educate the curious minds, especially for children, museums introduce them to unknown worlds, sparks their imagination and provide them with valuable learning experiences. The importance of the museum and visiting the museum are:

It encourages a love for the history

The 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. The Sir Syed collection in the museum shows Sir Syed's love for the historical heritage of the country and his thirst for knowledge in any written form or in object form.

Museum creates an unforgettable experience

Another important role of museum is, it provides an in depth experience. To read and hear about the artifact is not the same as viewing them personally. It can be a life changing experience, to immerse in artistic and aesthetic appeal of the artifact. Physically surrounded by the elements of which they are previously been taught, allows the student to connect with their class experiences. Field trips not only entertain they also supplement for material discussion in class.

CONCLUSION

The museum is a place to connect with our heritage through tangible and intangible material culture, and Musa Dakri Museum provides this in an effortless manner. By providing rare pictures and documents of university's history it gives a glimpse of the rich history of AMU. The science exhibit also increases the depth of exhibit by telling the theory of evolution of mankind, depicting our rich ecosystem in beautiful dioramas. The Sir Syed gallery contains the artefacts collected by the founder of AMU Sir Syed, and shows his knowledge in the archeological field, as he realizes its importance as a cultural wealth of our country, India. The museum contains different galleries showcases and dioramas covering a variety of fields of science and history. Although it has a great collection, the museum still needs to focus on attracting students and scholars in a more interactive way. The museum should incorporate teachings and outreach programs for attracting school students and have some hands on exhibit

which allows the visitor to connect in a more suitable manner. After studying all aspects of museum it shows a tremendous growth in all its fields. The Musa Dakri Museum is still have rooms for improvements and has a long way to go.

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