

## **A VISIT TO A UNIQUE LIBRARY**

(amunetwork@yahoogroups.com dated Monday, April 12, 2004; 3:07 PM)

Right in front of Barula Market, at Dodhpur, a place located on the outskirts of AMU, you will find across the road, the lane that leads to a huge white painted building, Tijara House. This is a place which houses a treasure of knowledge. A collection of research material that could hardly be found elsewhere.

As I entered the gate, I saw the words nicely written on green marble announcing the date of the Academy's inauguration by Mr. Hamid Ansari, IFS and former Vice-Chancellor of the AMU. The staircase led me to the first floor where Ibn Sina Academy of Medieval Medicine & Sciences was masterly inscribed on blue tiles along with some flowers using the Kashi Kari which was got made from Iran that excels in this work. Appreciating good taste of Prof. Zillur Rahman, as I approached the main entrance of the library, I was astounded when I witnessed the quality and craftsmanship of the furniture which was used to house the books and comfort the users. I was surrounded by fragrance and warmth of friendship while Prof. Zillur Rahman cheerfully welcomed me and thoroughly discussed about his dreams and desires that he nurtured in his heart. It was really amazing to learn that such a huge collection was gathered by him single handedly.

Named after its curator, Prof. Zillur Rahman, the Library of Ibn Sina Academy of Medieval Medicine & Sciences located at Aligarh is a repository of rare books, valuable MSS, microforms, paintings, photographs, sculptures, coins and postage stamps along with clippings of newspapers depicting the Aligarh Movement which dates back to early nineteenth century. As the library's name reflects, its main object was to equip the library with books and journals pertaining to the studies of Medieval medicine & sciences, but, later on Prof. Zillur Rahman conceived a desire to expand the library in as many fields as possible, gave birth to a small museum which has a unique collection of rare fountain pens, photographs, memoirs and relics of prominent personalities.

The fabulous collection of more than 3,500 coins is unique in the sense that it has been arranged in chronological order and framed in transparent glass panes so that both sides of the coin are easily visible. The glass frames fixed on revolving stands make easy access to each frame. The coins date back to Indo-Greek period, i.e. 300 B.C. to 2000 A.D. Thus explains the Indian civilization. Some very valuable and ancient currency notes belonging to pre Czar period also worth special mention.

A general collection of more than 1,00,000 postage stamps is separately placed which is a proud treasure. First Day covers of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, his companions, trustees and some eminent alumni of AMU are displayed. A few rare commemorative stamps have been issued by Indian Posts & Telegraphs Department have the photographs of Ibn Sina, Farabi, Raazi, Ibn Wateb, Al Barouni, Amir Khusro, Hafiz Shirazi, Mirza Ghalib, Saadi, Rumi, Omar Khayyam, Mir Anis, Bahadur Shah Zafar, etc. etc.

Nearly 200 rare fountain pens like Mont Blonk, Waterman, Parker, Sheffers and Cross, etc. date back to 1846 A.D.

Apart from the huge collection of books on Science and Medieval medicine, the main attraction of the library consists of books on and about Aligarh, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Mirza Ghalib. It is interesting, rather surprising to note that the first biography on Sir Syed was written in English by a foreigner and was printed in a foreign country. The book is available to glance through. A section of Urdu and other Indo-European literature is also an added attraction for the users. Books on Urdu poetry are separately displayed to quench the thirst of lovers of Urdu Shaeri.

The Magazines Section proudly possesses all issues of Aligarh Magazines published since 1947. It also has a few earlier issues. The issues of Tahzibul Akhlaq, the magazine founded by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, are also at display. The file contains its issues of 1874. After its reincarnation in the year 1982, complete set of issue is available for consultation. Copies of Fikr-o-Nazar are also on display.

MSS Section consists of more than 500 and most of them are unique like the copies of Holy Quran having ornamented borders and glittering edged papers.

The museum also has the replica of seal of prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Historical group photographs of personalities of AMU, a self portrait of Shifaul Mulk Hakim Abdul Latif are proud possessions of the museum.

It has been noticed that retired persons of AMU are so much nostalgic that even after their superannuation they prefer to settle down in Aligarh. This Academy is a heaven for those who wish to utilize their time and enhance their knowledge. In this way they will also get rid of the idle life that leaves them in a state of ennui which is hazardous for their health and happiness.

The Academy also arranges from time to time guest lectures by eminent personalities on topics of interest that come under the purview of the Academy. By taking active part in such programmes, they can utilize their time and contribute for the noble cause of the Academy.

Newsletter of Ibn Sina Academy (NISA), a quarterly organ, is another important source of information that keep the lovers of Medieval Science abreast of the activities and research around the globe. News on Book reviews, awards, scholarships, forthcoming conferences, workshops and symposia and much more information can be found in NISA. Most of the earlier copies of NISA can be accessed on its website: <http://www.ibnsinaacademy.com>.

Prof. Zillur Rahman has been very much worried about Muslim culture which, in his opinion, is bordering towards extinction. Acquiescing this fact, he has established a special section in the museum displaying the dresses, jewelleries, garments, crockery & cutlery and other items like Huqqa, Paandaan. Khasdaan, Itrdaan and Batwa, etc. that represent Muslim tradition. People who pay a visit to the Library specially admire the items on display in this section.

Prof. Zillur Rahman has devoted all his courage, earnings and brain to make the library a place where people can freely consult books and other reading material. The library has "Open Access System" where people enjoy their stay as long as they are surrounded with valuable collection distilled with important information. For all these qualities, the library can be reckoned as one of the best research and specialized libraries of the country.

Prof. Zillur rahman's efforts are remarkable. An unflinching personality, no trace of fatigue on his face. No sign of retirement on his anatomy. A continuous, ceaseless, never ending endeavour that he has embarked upon must get recognition and applause. He deserves our appreciation. We must realize that at least there is a person who has positive thinking and is deeply concerned with our culture and tradition which calls for our serious attention and responsibility too. Let us join hands and help him physically, materially and even morally in making his dreams a reality lest our culture, values and traditions become a part of forgotten chronicle of human race and perished in the pages of history. Let us encourage him for what he has done so far and help him achieve his endeavour. Well done professor. Kudos to you.

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