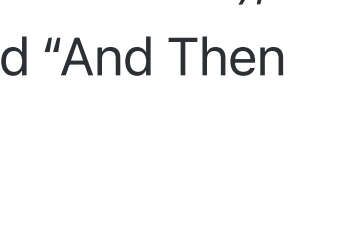
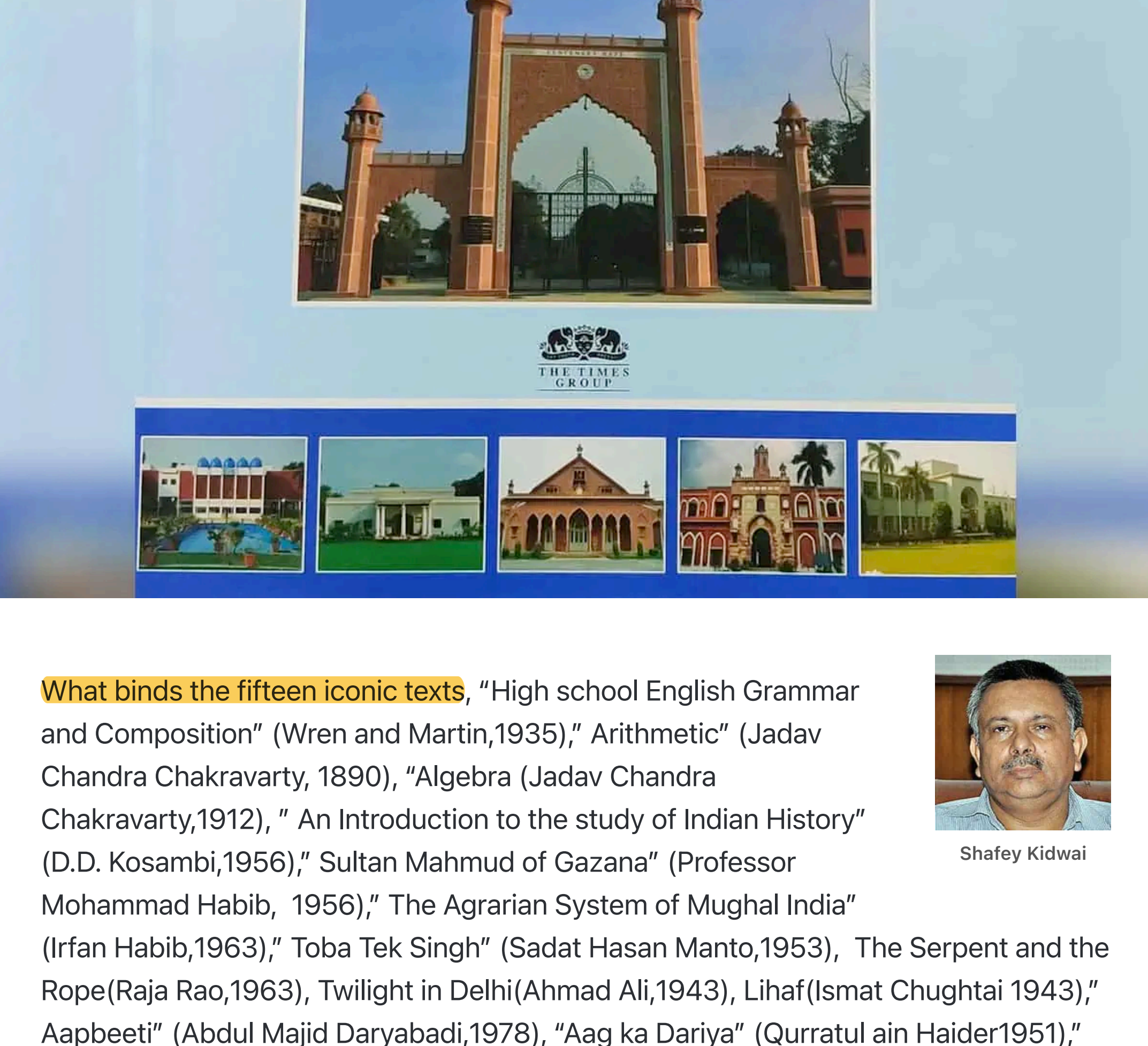


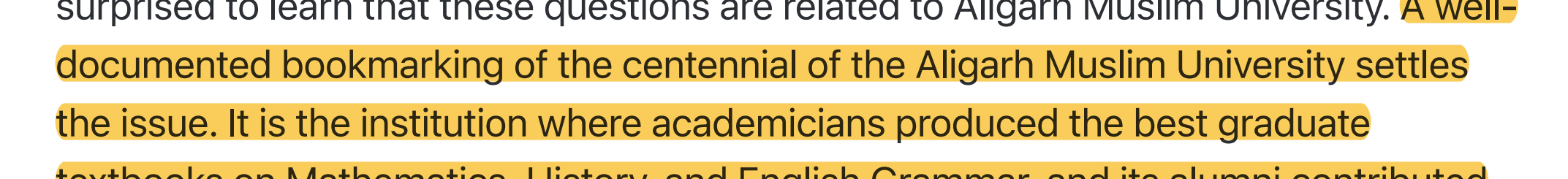
More than a Hagiographical Account

Guest Contributor | Published: 25th April 2022 8:22 pm IST



Shafey Kidwai

What binds the fifteen iconic texts. "High school English Grammar and Composition" (Wren and Martin,1935)," Arithmetic" (Jadav Chandra Chakravarty, 1890), "Algebra (Jadav Chandra Chakravarty,1912), " An Introduction to the study of Indian History" (D.D. Kosambi,1956)," Sultan Mahmud of Gazana" (Professor Mohammad Habib, 1956)," The Agrarian System of Mughal India" (Irfan Habib,1963)," Toba Tek Singh" (Sadat Hasan Manto,1953), The Serpent and the Rope(Raja Rao,1963), Twilight in Delhi(Ahmad Ali,1943), Lihaf(Ismat Chughtai 1943)," Aapbeeti" (Abdul Majid Daryabadi,1978), "Aag ka Dariya" (Qurratul ain Haider1951)," Aab-e- Gum(Mushtaq Yusufi,1990), "Isme Azam" (Shaheryar,1968), and "And Then One Day (NasiruddinShah,2014) together?



This seemingly perplexing question may leave many to grope for answers. One leaves surprised to learn that these questions are related to Aligarh Muslim University. **A well-documented bookmarking of the centennial of the Aligarh Muslim University settles the issue. It is the institution where academicians produced the best graduate textbooks on Mathematics, History, and English Grammar, and its alumni contributed significantly to the collective life of India.** These unheard but vital aspects of the university (It has been frequently, though erroneously described as the hotbed of Muslim communalism) are exhumed by the recent archival research in the book. **The book, A History of Aligarh Muslim University, astutely edited by Asim Siddiqui, Rahat Abrar and Faiza Abbasi, is published by The Times of India. Group, 2020).**

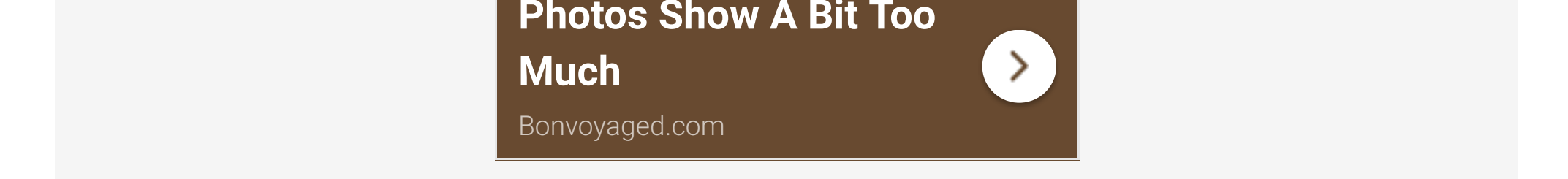
Not infrequently, one finds AMU is being pilloried for the crimes it never committed. Recently CAA protest and hanging of Jinnah's portrait, and covid casualties at the AMU medical college disproportionately highlighted by media, dented the academic and secular credentials of the university. The publication, offering more than glowing hagiographical descriptions, seeks to locate the university in shaping the collective life of Indians, especially Muslims, in the last one hundred years. The university's contribution, not much visible in the public domain, is delineated with a sense of admiration and objectivity in almost equal measure. It is not always prejudice, discrimination and political hostility that accounts for the university's decline.



The centenary volume springs up some pleasant surprises as it reveals that the most influential textbook on English grammar in the subcontinent was coauthored by Henry Martin, who was the pro-vice-chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University from 1930-to 1931. Similarly, the author of the two most popular books on arithmetic and algebra was written by Babu Chand Chakravorty (1855-1920), who served in the Department of Mathematics. Eminent Historian and mathematician D.D.Kosambi (1907-1966) and renowned French mathematician Andre Weil (1906-1998), known for his seminal work on number theory, were also associated with the Department of Mathematics.

The famous scholars of medieval history, Professor Mohammad Habib (1895-1971) and Irfan Habib (1931), were the faculty members and Sadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955), Raja Rao (1908-2006), Ahmad Ali (1910-1994, Ismat Chughtai (1915-1991), Abdul Majid Daryabadi (1892-1977), Qurratul Ain Haider (1927-2007), Mushtaq Ahmad Yusufi, (1923-2018), Shahryar(1936-2012) and Naseeruddin Shah(1950) were the students.

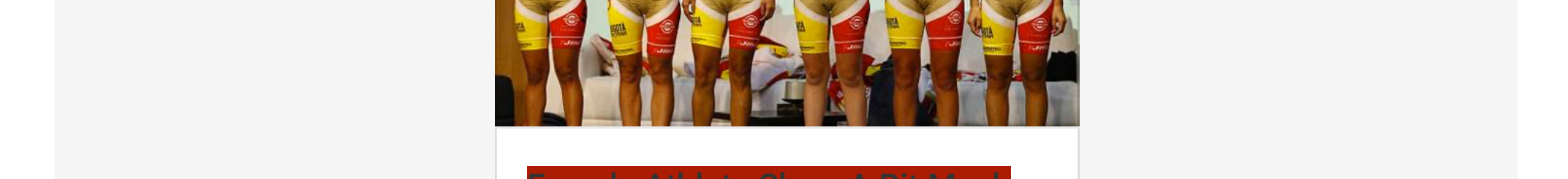
Indeed more than a glossy coffee table book spurring visual spectacle instead of conjuring up cerebral response, the book is skillfully divided into six sections such as "Important Milestones, Builders of the Aligarh Muslim University, towards the making of Modern India, Realizing the idea of a university, Evolution of university, and Distinguish visitors to Aligarh Muslim University.



Aligarh Muslim University has produced two Barat Ratan awardees, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1988) and Zakir Hussain (1897-1969) and its contribution to the Indian national movement, despite the marked fascination of its student for the Muslim League in the late thirties and forties, is enormous as its students Shaukat Ali, Mohammad Ali, Hasrat Mohani, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, Raja Mahindra Pratap, Mohammad Yunus, Saifuddin Kitchlu, Abdul Majeed Khawaja, KM Ashraf, Qazi Jaleel Abbasi, Sheikh Abdullah, Abbas Ali and after partition, Mohsina Kidwai, Anwara Taimur, Saheb Singh Verma, Arif Mohammad Khan, Azam Khan and many more dominated the political arena.

Not people know that iconic dhrupad singer Rahimuddin Khan Dagar (1901-1976) completed his graduation from Aligarh Muslim University. A Padma Bhushan awardee. Ustad Rahim Uddin Khan Dagar contributed immensely to articulating a distinct variation of Dhrupad, the oldest existing form of Hindustani classical music, The Dagar Bani. He blazed a new trail in dhrupad singing. He preferred a lower octave and hardly used Madhya and taar saptak, the highest notes. Asim Siddiqui, one of the editors and a known scholar of film studies, took pains to highlight the lesser-known contribution of AMU to the Indian film industry. With a marked sense of academic rigour, an awe-inspiring list is produced that includes the name of the original pin-up girl of Hindi cinema Begum para, Renuka Devi, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, Akhtarul Iman, Jan Nisar Akhtar, Shakeel Badayuni, Talat Mahmood, Rahi Massom Raza, Saeed Jaffrey, Surekha Sikri, Naseeruddin shah, Javed Akhtar, Muzaffar Ali, Anubhav Sinha, Dilip Tahir and the like. Acclaimed playwrights Habib Tanvir and Asghar Wahajat studied here. Its alumni were globally acclaimed printmaker Zarina Hashmi and famous collage painter Farhan Mujib.

Passion for literature has been the hallmark of the university. It produced many writers who wrote in Urdu, English, Hindi, Malayalam and Assamese and bagged the highest literary awards, including Jnanpith, Sahitya academy award and Iqbal Samman. The celebrated authors groomed by the university seem to be ever-growing, and some prominent are; Hasrat Mohani, Moulvi Abdul Haq, Rasheed Ahmad Siddiqui, Abdul Majid Daryabadi, Josh Malihabadi, Raja Rao, Ahmad Ali, Majaz, Sadat Hasan Manto, Hayatullah Ansari, Ale Ahmad Suroor, Qurratul Ain Haider, Ali Sardar Jafri, Ismat Chughtai, Mushtaq Ahmad Yusufi, Mukhtar Masood, Asloob Ahmad Ansari, Waheed Akhtar, Munibur Rehman, Reyazur Rehman Sherwani, Nazeer Ahmad, Nebakant Barua, KP Singh, Namita Singh, Ifthikhat Alam Khan, Ather Siddiqui, Azarmi Dukht Nahid Safavi, Yaseen Mazhar Siddiqui and many others.



It is not that Aligarh Muslim University puts a premium on oriental learning, languages, and literature. It strove to propagate science almost equally in line with its founder's dream. The booky members and students have been recognized internationally and nationally. Many faculty provides an exhaustive list of figures Obaid Siddiqui, Zahoor Qasim, Shamim Jairaj puri, Shahid Jameel, Muzaffar Ali, Fakhruddin Ahmad, Mohammad Shafi, Abrar Mustafa Khan, Nandendra Kumar Govil, Premnath Ganju, Piara Singh Gill, Salim uz zaman Siddiqui, Akhlaqur Rehman Kidwai, Asoke Nath Mitra and Qudsiya Tehsin etc.

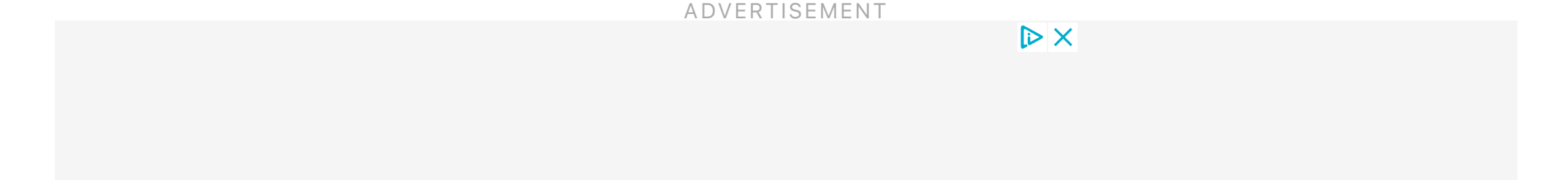
The Aligarh Muslim University made a sterling contribution to Urdu, English journalism and electronic media. It was the first university to introduce a course in journalism in 1938, and the course was abruptly scrapped in 1941. The full-fledged department of Journalism came into existence much later. However, its alumni made a mark at the international and national levels. Some of them are Saif Khalid(Aljazeera), Anuj Kumar (the Hindu), Brijendra Prashar (The Hindustan Times), Navaid Anjum(OutLook), Arfa Khanum Sherwani (The wire), Romana Israr(ABP news0, Sumera Khan (TV9) Hina Zubair(ETV Urdu), Ehtisham Khan (TV 18), Jeelani Khan (Resident editor, Inquilab), Ismaeel Zafar Khan (group editor, Rashtriya Shara) Mohammad Anas (Sunday Guardian), Ehtisham Ali Khan (NDTV), Poonam Sharma(Aajtak) and the like.

Since its inception AMU has been known for promoting sports and perhaps it was the institution that set up a cricket club and Rudyard Kipling mentioned it. It hardly surprising to find that Wazir Ali, Nazir Ali, Lala Amarnath Syed Mushtaq Ali, Jhangir Khan, Mohammad shahid, Rizwan shamshad and ace hockey players BP Govinda, Inamur Rehman, Zafar Iqbal, Aslam Sher Khan and many more studied here.



Several books on AMU has been published in the centenary year. The Sir Syed academy too published three volumes of the collected works of Sir Syed and seminal works of Christian Troll, GFI Graham, David Lelyveld and Gail Mainult have been published by the academy. The centenary volume encapsulates what AMU is all about with a sense of ease and objectivity.

Shafey Kidwai is a bilingual critic who got Sahitya Academy Award in 2019 for Urdu. He is professor of Mass Communication at Aligarh Muslim University.



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