

National Mission for Clean Ganga
(Reg. Society)
Ministry of Jal Shakti
Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation
Government of India


Indian
National Trust
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Azaadi Ke Rang Bharatiya Sanskriti Ke Sang

**नमामि
गंगे**

Documentation of Ganga from Gaumukh to Gangasagar Aligarh District Intangible Cultural Heritage




INTACH

Cover Image: Applique work or Phool Patti ka Kaam of Aligarh

Image Source: <https://www.dsource.in/gallery/applique-work-aligarh-1#128590>

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Intangible Cultural Heritage

February-March 2022

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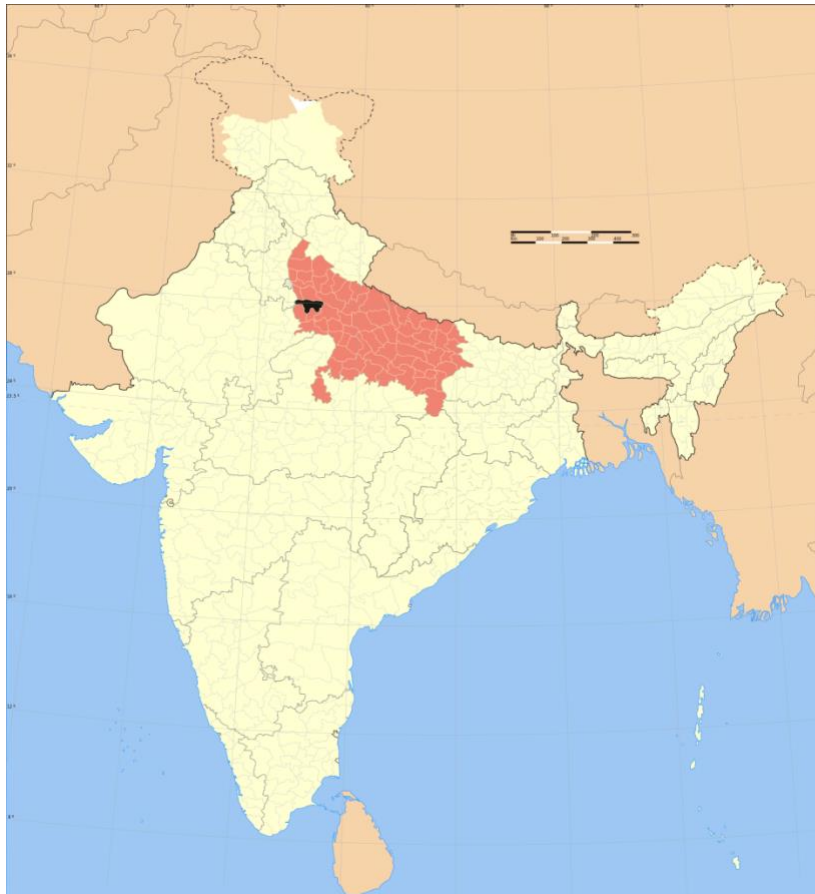

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Introduction

Situated in the north-western part of the **State of Uttar Pradesh** along the banks of **River Ganga**, **Aligarh district** is a place known for its rich and complicated history. Earlier known by the name '**Koil**' until the 18th century, this district lying in the **Ganga Yamuna doab** forms the southernmost portion of the Meerut division. Located 90 miles southeast of Delhi¹, Aligarh district is divided into 12 administrative blocks namely **Tappal, Chandaus, Jawan, Atrauli, Bijauli, Khair, Lodha, Gonda, Iglas, Akrabad, Dhanipur** and **Gangiri**.²



Location of Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh on a map of India, Source: Wikimedia Commons

¹ (aligarh.nic.in)<https://aligarh.nic.in/about-district/>

² (Ali, 2012)https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340096777_Urbanization_Literacy_and_Occupational_Structure_of_Aligarh_District_A_Case_Study

ADMINISTRATIVE BLOCKS OF THE DISTRICT

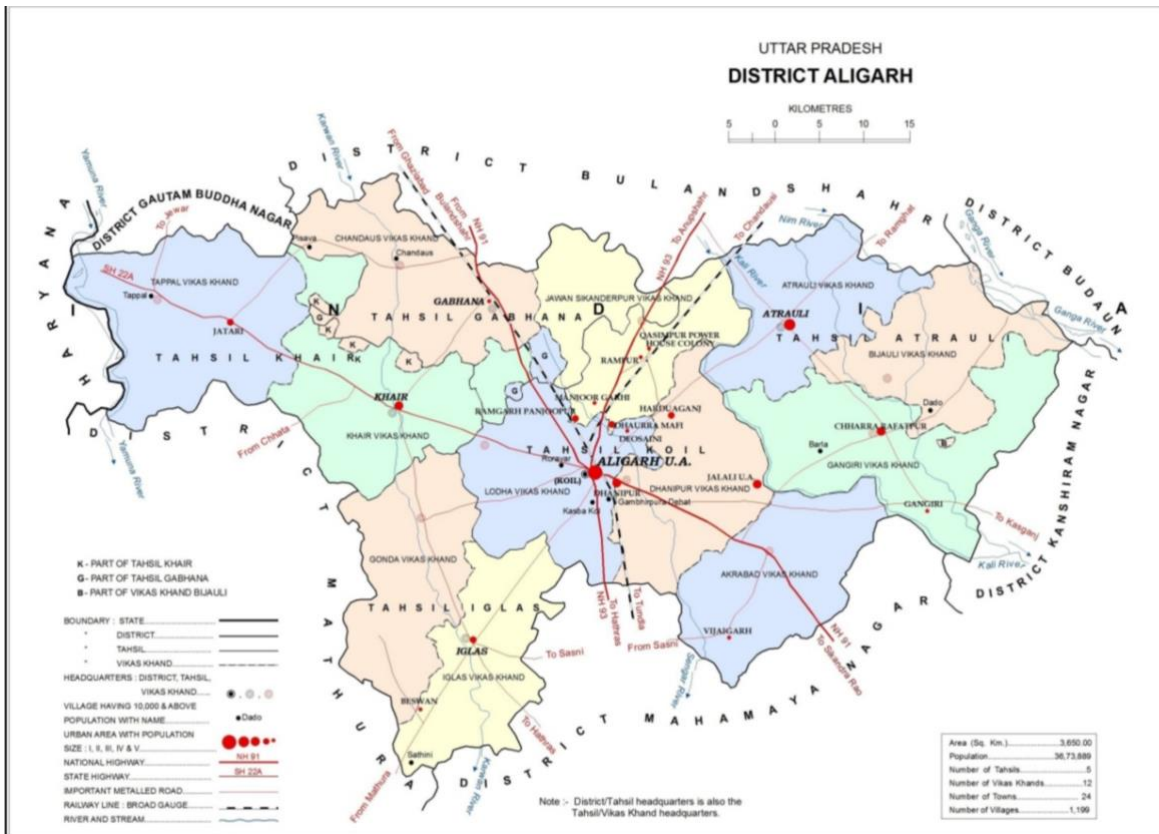


Administrative Blocks of the District of Aligarh, Source: (Ali, 2012)https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340096777_Urbanization_Literacy_and_Occupational_Structure_of_Aligarh_District_A_Case_Study

This district is cut across by River Ganga and River Yamuna and their tributaries and other narrow channels making this district topographically a fertile riverine tract of land. The River Ganga separates this district from Budaun in the north east, while River Yamuna forms the dividing line between Aligarh and the district of Gurgaon in Haryana. Tributaries of Ganga like the Kali Nadi or the Kalindri, the Isan River and the tributaries of the Yamuna-Karwan and the Sengar rivers along with the presence of a well-planned canal and drainage system, make way for good cultivation of crops, thus making agriculture the mainstay of the economy.

Apart from agriculture, Aligarh sees a good amount of commercial benefit from its famous lock industry. Due to the easy availability of the necessary raw materials and good power supply, Aligarh has developed into an important hub of lock making industries, so much so that the locks made here are exported internationally giving Aligarh the name of ‘**City of Locks**’.³

³ (One District One Product: Uttar Pradesh), <http://odopup.in/en/article/district-profile-aligarh>



Source: District Census Handbook: Aligarh (2011)

History

POPULAR LEGENDS AND THE ANCIENT ORIGINS OF ALIGARH

Aligarh in its initial days was known by the name of 'Kol' or 'Koil' until it got its present name in the 18th century. According to a popular legend, it is believed that this place was known as Kol after a demon (*asura*) of the same name was killed by the mythological hero Balarama, brother of Lord Krishna with the help of the Ahirs, who helped him take control over this tract of land. Another place in the district called Harduaganj is also known to have been built by Lord Balarama and is said to have been colonized by the Ahirs of his army.⁴ The Buddhist remains found in Balai Quila, now deposited at the Aligarh Institute, indicate that certain cities were inhabited in the Buddhist times and were centres of Buddhism. It is also believed that Aligarh was a part of the Gupta Empire and was also under the governance of the satraps of Muttra, as many coins have been found at Shahgarh.⁵



Lord Balarama who is associated with origin story of Koil, Image Source: Wikipedia

⁴ (Nevill, 1909, p. 161)

⁵Ibid, p. 161

According to Edwin T. Atkinson, as per another legend, this place was inhabited by the Dor tribe of Rajputs in 372 CE who were the feudatories under the subordination of the Tomar clan. It is believed that this area came under the domain of Kali, brother of Vikrama Sen who held the neighbouring Baran in Bulandsahar district. Both are said to be the subjects of Raja Anang Pal of the Tomar clan; however the veracity of this is not clear since Anang Pal came at a later time in the 11th century CE. Nevertheless, Koil was under the suzerainty of a line of successors of Vikrama Sen. One of the descendants, Raja Budh Sen is believed to be the hero of another popular legend associated with this place. It is said that once, mounted on his horse, he was going to Delhi from Jalali, and stopped near a *jhil* (a small water body). While he was waiting for his retinue to arrive, he was attacked by a fox, who persistently kept barking at him despite being wounded by the king's sword. Seeing the courage of the fox, the followers of the king pointed out that there must be something in the air and soil of this place which made the fox stand strong against the king. Believing this to be true, Raja Budh Sen is said to have laid the foundation of this city and a fort known as the Dor fortress, which was then made his capital and remained so for successive generations. This narrative of the origin of Koil is again not verifiable by historical facts but is quite popular.⁶

ALIGARH DURING THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

It is believed that in 1194 CE, Qutubuddin Aibak under the aegis of Muhammad Ghori attacked this district and took control over Koil, which back in the day was one of the most celebrated fortresses in India according to Hasan Nizami.⁷ It is believed that a ruthless assault had ensued in which the Dors and the Bargujars were all exterminated, leaving this place in the hands of the Sultans of the Mamluk dynasty. After Qutubuddin Aibak, his son-in-law Iltutmish held sway over this area. However, during the reign of his son Rukunuddin Firoz, who was incapable to manage the rebellion among the governors started by the Wazir, Nizamuddin Muhammad Junaidi, he was soon deposed.⁸

Following this, Koil was under the occupation of Nizamuddin Junaidi, who did not accept the suzerainty of Razia Sultana, so he treated this as his base and continued his rebellion. This region was then governed by a series of short-term governors or *wazirs* who fought among themselves out of avarice and the internal dissensions among them continued until 1259, when Koil was united with Biana and Gwalior to form a single province under the

⁶ (Nevill, 1909), p. 162

⁷ (Atkinson, 1875, p. 485)

⁸ (Nevill, 1909, p. 165)

charge of Malik Muhammad Sher Khan, nephew of the emperor, Ghiyasuddin Balban. Balban, who was engaged in multiple military activities here, had association with this district since 1242. To commemorate his unquestionable authority, he erected the great minar at Koil dedicated to his master Nasiruddin Mahmud. This was constructed on the high ground of Balai Qila, which was later demolished in 1862.⁹

During the reign of the Khalji dynasty, the history of Aligarh sees sparse developments. We only find mention of this during the reign of Jalaluddin Firoz Khalji. Aligarh, then known as Koil, formed a part of his territory and was governed by Malik Kiki.¹⁰ In 1342, the famous Moroccan traveler Ibn Batuta is said to have travelled through this area on his way to China and in his account “Kitab-ur-Rehla”, he records that this area was a fine town with mango groves which is why this place is also called ‘Sabzabad’ or the green city.¹¹



Ibn Battuta, who visited this district in the 14th century, Image Source: Google Arts and Culture

When Muhammad bin Tughlaq was at throne of the Delhi Sultanate, this place faced severe repressions in the form of tax exactions, and famine conditions, adding to the misery of the people. Peace was however restored for a brief period but soon after he passed away, confusion and distress again prevailed in this area. In 1389 when Muhammad Shah was ousted from Delhi by Abu Bakr, he came to the doab region and established

⁹ (Nevill, 1909, p. 165)

¹⁰Ibid, p. 166

¹¹Ibid, p. 166

himself at Jalesar; Koil formed a part of his terrain. However, following his short reign, chaos prevailed in this area as many rebellions broke out and no competent ruler could succeed in bringing peace and tranquility until Bahlol Lodi ascended to the throne of Delhi, during whose reign Isa Khan Turkbacha managed the affairs in the doab region. Following Bahlol Lodi, his son and successor Sikandar Lodi's reign didn't mark any significant changes for Koil, present day Aligarh, except that he had given away this tract of land to Umar Khan, who was subsequently killed in a rebellion caused by the zamindars of Jartauli. So, later when Ibrahim Lodi succeeded, Koil was handed over to Umar Khan's son Muhamad Khan, who had built a fort called Muhammadgarh in 1525 which was later renamed as Aligarh as recorded in an extant inscription.¹²

After Ibrahim Lodi was defeated by Babur in the Battle of Panipat and the Mughal Empire had been established, Babur had rapidly taken possession of the doab land and he kept Kachak Ali Baig as the in charge of this place, whose hold over the district was faltering due to the rising rebellion among the Rajputs before the Battle of Khanwa. After Babur came out victorious, he overthrew any form of opposition and held strong sway over this terrain. Peace and tranquility prevailed in Koil during the reign of Humayun, and even when Sher Shah took over, Koil did not witness any significant events; even when his son Islam Shah took the reins of the empire in his hand.

When Akbar ascended on the Mughal throne, Koil was reduced to the position of a mere capital of a sarkar¹³ that saw some significant administrative changes in revenue assessment, signifying that this area was very fertile and yielded a major chunk of the revenue of the Mughal Empire.¹⁴ For a long time we don't see any significant developments in this region, except the rise of the Jats. One Turkoman governor, Sabit Khan rose to prominence during the time of the Mughal emperors Farrukhsiyar and Muhammad Shah whose reign marked a brief interregnum. He is said to have commissioned the construction of the dargah of Ilah Baksh in 1728 and revamped the fort of Muhammadgarh and renamed it to Sabitgarh.

After Sabit Khan passed away, Maratha and Jat incursions followed. Safdar Jung, Nawab wazir of Awadh had sought for support from the Jats against his campaign against the Bangash Pathans. In the process Suraj Mal the leader of the Jats established control over Koil and subsequently took over the fort of Koil in 1745.¹⁵ He changed the name of the fort to Ramgarh, which was briefly taken under siege by Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1759 when he invaded India and was made the Afghan headquarters.¹⁶ Soon after he left, the Jats retreated

¹² (Nevill, 1909), p. 168

¹³ (Nevill, 1909, p. 168)

¹⁴Ibid, p. 169

¹⁵Ibid, p. 170

¹⁶ (Atkinson, 1875, p. 489)

only to face stiff opposition from the Rohillas under Najib-ud-Daula. However, the Jats maintained their supremacy over Aligarh until 1773 when finally they were ousted by Najaf Khan, who is known to have revamped the fort of Ramgarh and finally gave the name of **Aligarh**, the name by which the district is known today.¹⁷



Aligarh Fort, Image Source: Hello travel

After Najaf Khan had passed away, his successor Afrasayab Khan who became the amir-ul-umra, inherited his possessions and holdings. However soon, all this was seized by Mahadji Sindhia who established the Maratha rule over Aligarh marked by a brief interregnum when Ghulam Kadir Khan had besieged the fort for a short while in 1788, but the Marathas were successful in driving them out and held sway over Aligarh till 1803.¹⁸

ALIGARH DURING THE MODERN PERIOD

The Marathas under Mahadji Sindhia had developed a battalion in European fashion with the aid of De Boigne, the French commandant. He also formed a large cantonment here. Later he was succeeded by Perron. Aligarh was brought under the administration of Captain Perron, who held the supreme command here. However, the brewing factionalism between the Peshwas and the Holkars became a bone of contention between the Peshwas and the Sindhias, which led to the alliance between the Peshwas and the British. This led to the formation of clans in which the regional kingdoms sided with the foreign powers that later changed the political scenario in the years to come. The triple

¹⁷ (Atkinson, 1875), p. 490

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 491

alliance of the Holkar, Sindhia and the Raja of Nagpur against the British, Nizam and the Peshwa, led to a tussle that ended up in the treaty of 1802 by the terms of which the British extended their frontiers in Aligarh.¹⁹ This later resulted in the watershed event of the Siege of Aligarh in 1803. On 29th August, the British under the command of Lord Lake advanced and met the Perron with his artillery and forces and what followed was a violent battle that led to the loss of lives on both sides. The British under Lord Lake emerged successful, and the fort was taken over. This event marked the commencement of British rule over Aligarh.



MahadjiSindhia, Image Source: Wikipedia

However, conditions of chaos and anarchy persisted in the district among the taluqdars and the revenue farmers. Meanwhile the Holkars had declared war in 1804 along with Nahar Ali Khan and his nephew Dunde Khan and Lalkhanis of the neighbouring Bulandshahr district as well as the plunders carried out by the Pinadris under the leader Amir Khan aggravated the situation.²⁰ However the mighty and the organized British forces managed to expel them.

Following this nothing significant happened under the British administration until the outbreak of the revolt of 1857. Aligarh being located on the main highway of the doab

¹⁹ (Atkinson, 1875, p. 492)

²⁰ (Nevill, 1909, p. 179)

saw the movement of the sepoy and that of the British forces at their heels.²¹ When the news of the mutiny at Meerut reached Aligarh, a period of uncertainty and confusion prevailed among the sepoy of the 9th Native Infantry under Major Eld. On 20th May it is believed that after a Brahman named Narayan instigated a resident, the sepoy rose in rebellion against the British regime. The officers and civilians escaped, and the station was occupied by rebel troops. Courts were plundered and burned down, and jails were broken releasing the prisoners, the treasury was looted.²² Anything that symbolized the British government was broken and disrupted by the rebel sepoy. The civil population took part equally in the rebellion with their domestic weapons. It is believed that the local farmers even had set fire to the indigo factories.²³

Initially the position of the British was very precarious; they had made the military factory at Madrak the base. From 2nd July to 24th August 1857, the Rebels had completely disrupted the British administration and established what is in colonial parlance known as the “rebel government”. It was in mid-August that the British managed to regain their position after they attacked the rebels under the leader Ghaus Khan and maulvi Abdul Jalil.²⁴ Slowly and steadily they re-established themselves in all the parganas of the district.

The subsequent developments post the Revolt of 1857, however, have not been recorded anywhere.

²¹ (Nevill, 1909), p. 181

²² (Atkinson, 1875, p. 490)

²³ Ibid, p. 503

²⁴ (Atkinson, 1875, p. 502)

Art and Crafts

Aligarh is one of the leading centres of Uttar Pradesh known for a wide range of art and crafts that are unique to this region. Aligarh has huge repertoire of small industries that make products of materials locally available and contribute immensely to the revenue and the livelihood of the local population especially the women who form a strong section of the artisans as most of these art and craft works are carried out at homes, within the precincts of the household. Thus, by virtue of these small cottage industries, they get a financial impetus and are enriching the traditional art works of the district.

Some of the local handicraft works that are made here on a small scale are wood carvings, carpets and dhurries, moonj basketry. There are some prominent ones as well like the appliqué work, Plaster of Paris statue-making, brass statues and the most famous of them all which has given Aligarh an identity of its own, the making of locks. However, unlike other art and craft work, lock making forms an industry and is mostly manufactured in big clusters where a large section of the work force is engaged.

Aligarh is one of the many places in Uttar Pradesh that is known for wood carving, ranging from brass and copper wire and sheet inlay in sheesham wood known as *tarkashi* work as well as carving on sheesham, ebony, neem and sal wood. The intricate carving done on wood can be seen mostly on furniture as well as jaali and fret worked lattice screens and panels.²⁵

As per the district gazetteer, a good deal of calico printing on hand made cloth is done by the chippis.²⁶

A major portion of the artisans in Aligarh are the Muslim weavers or the *julahas*. Both men and women are extensively involved in most of these cottage industries. One such involves the carpet and the dhurries industry. *Panja dhurries* or the *jainamuz* (the ones used to sit on while offering prayers), the ones with plain striped designs; are woven in plain weaving technique using the well-faced tapestry technique.²⁷ Sometimes they are decorated by Arabic sentences or monograms. Dhurrie weaving of Aligarh is usually more of a coarse kind and at times they also use camel's hair.²⁸ Dhurrie or craft weaving which is essentially a domestic craft has found a thriving international market.

²⁵ (Ranjan & Ranjan, p. 134)

²⁶ (Nevill, 1909, p. 61)

²⁷ (Ranjan & Ranjan), p. 161

²⁸ Ibid, p.161

Aligarh also sees in somewhat small scale the making of *moonj*-baskets. Moonj and rara are certain kind of wild grasses that grow abundantly in this region of the state out of which baskets or mauni are made.²⁹

In the section below, a detailed description of the **major art forms; lock making, brass statues, Plaster of Paris idols, decorative dolls** and the most prominent of all **appliqué** work are given:

LOCK MAKING INDUSTRY

One of the leading industries of Aligarh is the **lock making industry**. Aligarh sees a good amount of commercial benefit from its famous lock industry. Due to the easy availability of the necessary raw materials and good power supply, Aligarh has developed into an important hub of lock making, so much so that the locks made here are exported internationally giving Aligarh the name of '**City of Locks**'.³⁰

Back in the medieval times, the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb had built a garrison here, which later developed into a cluster for locksmiths. In 1890, local entrepreneurs started the production of locks on a small scale and this venture has now grown on a large scale. Johnson and Co. was the first English locks firm that was set up. According to the district gazetteer, there are now 2000 lock manufacturing artisan units currently in Aligarh employing over more than 200,000 employees.³¹The city has seen a burgeoning of many manufacturers, exporters and suppliers who are now actively involved in the brass, bronze, iron, and aluminum industries. The different processes of lock-making are carried out in different units.³²There are around three thousand units currently that are involved in handcrafting brass locks.³³ A wide range of locks are manufactured here; padlocks, door locks, multi slot, bicycle locks, multipurpose locks, etc. Locks manufactured here are exported all over the world, thus making locks and hardware production a major cottage industry.

Locks in Aligarh are manufactured not just as a commodity catering to safety and security needs, but it is also one of the major craft traditions. Exquisite locks with intricate and beautiful designs are made of brass with triple locking mechanism. They have unique designs ranging from fish hanging from a rod, a camel to an owl with big eyes that do not just fulfill decorative needs but are also sturdy and durable.

²⁹ (Ranjan & Ranjan), p. 164

³⁰ (One District One Product: Uttar Pradesh) <http://odopup.in/en/article/district-profile-aligarh>

³¹ (Ahmed, 2012)

³² (One District One Product: Uttar Pradesh)<http://odopup.in/en/article/district-profile-aligarh>

³³ (Ranjan & Ranjan, p. 141)

The base material of these handmade locks is brass, and the moulds used are also made of brass, which is used in the sand-casting process. The object is then filed; after which buffing machines are then used for polishing, varying from antique, copper finish to normal brass, and the product is then ready for use. The entire production process is more of an assembly line method where each craftsman focuses on each step of the process. On an average 30 to 40 locks and their respective keys are also manufactured in a day.³⁴

However, in the present times the sale of such hand-made intricately designed locks, have gone down drastically. Now, they are used as antique items mainly for exhibitions or are occasionally bought by art connoisseurs. The tradition of hand-made locks is slowly dying out, merely having an ornamental value.³⁵

In an excerpt of an interview of *“The Hindu”* with Javed Hussain, a locksmith of Aligarh said that now he and his brother *“make locks on machines, a majority of which are ordinary. Their handmade locks are either curio items made when they participate in fairs. They have workers who are skilled in this craft. Since the automatic lock and key system are preferred today and the handmade locks have no demand”*.³⁶

In the face of reduction in demand, these days it is seen that the hand-made locks are facing competition from the cheaply priced and easily available Chinese locks, thus jeopardizing this art form. It is because of these reasons that many locksmiths are now slowly taking to making decorative brass wares.³⁷

³⁴ (Balasubramaniam, 2017) <https://www.thehindu.com/society/history-and-culture/locks-as-antique-pieces/article19801677.ece>

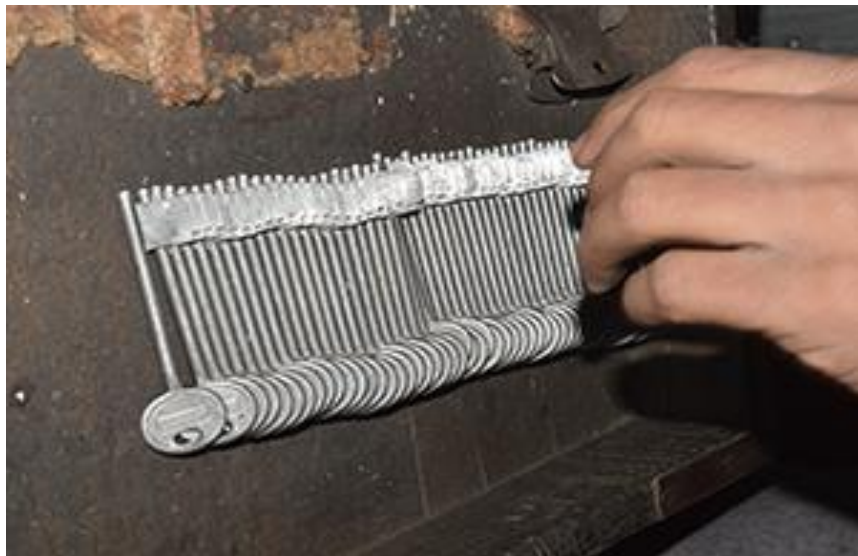
³⁵ (Balasubramaniam, 2017) <https://www.thehindu.com/society/history-and-culture/locks-as-antique-pieces/article19801677.ece>

³⁶ (Balasubramaniam, 2017) <https://www.thehindu.com/society/history-and-culture/locks-as-antique-pieces/article19801677.ece>

³⁷ (Ranjan & Ranjan), p. 141



Locksmiths of Aligarh making locks. Image Source: One District One Product: Uttar Pradesh
<http://odopup.in/en/article/district-profile-aligarh>



Worker at a lock making unit of Aligarh manufacturing keys. Image Source: One District One Product: Uttar Pradesh
<http://odopup.in/en/article/district-profile-aligarh>



Decorative Locks with intricate designs, Image Source: The Hindu (<https://www.thehindu.com/society/history-and-culture/locks-as-antique-pieces/article19801677.ece>)



Image Source: The Hindu (<https://www.thehindu.com/society/history-and-culture/locks-as-antique-pieces/article19801677.ece>)



Image Source: The Hindu (<https://www.thehindu.com/society/history-and-culture/locks-as-antique-pieces/article19801677.ece>)



Lock making cluster, Aligarh

Image Source: The Thaath (YouTube Channel)



A worker at the lock manufacturing cluster

Image Source: The Thaath (YouTube Channel)



Image Source: The Thaath (YouTube Channel)



Image Source: The Thaath (YouTube Channel)

BRASS STATUES

Aligarh is one of the prime centres of Uttar Pradesh where thousands of artisans are involved in making statues and monuments made of brass hardware. Uttar Pradesh is one of the largest brass and copper making states in India. Obtained from melting minerals or old scrap, the raw material is then either given shape while heating it or by pouring the metal in a mould of sand. Mostly brass, copper and zinc are used as they are light and usually non-corrosive. They are heated and when they reach the red hot molten stage, they are poured in the mould so that the body of the statue is ready. The heads of the statues are made and cut out separately and then it is polished to amplify the lustre effect on the idols.³⁸

³⁸ (Baral, S., & Lija, Brass Work - Aligarh, p. 2)



Brass Statue of Buddha, Image Source

<https://www.dsourc.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>

Some of the **raw materials and equipment** used in the process are **hammer**, used to give shape to the metal when it is molten hot; **blacksmith Tongs (*chinti*)** used for holding the work piece firmly; **cast iron container (*Chani*)** for filtering the fine sand, **mesh**; **wood stick** used to crush the mixture of sand to make it smooth in texture, **Charcoal** is used as fuel in furnace for smelting, **chalk powder** used to prevent molding sand from sticking, **casting frames** or iron frames used for casting the product, **roller** for rolling the sand mixture evenly after stamping with the feet, **soldering machine** for joining the two parts of the metal surface, **chisels** to get the required design patterns on the casted metal surface, **files**, to cut, shape the surface of metal piece in the required sizes, **sandpaper** used for making the surface smooth, **brush**, used for cleaning purpose, **crucible**, to hold the brass metal for melting, **tongs**, for lifting and holding the heated crucible, **hand crank blower**, used for melting brass metal, **brass material** or the raw material for the molten metal, **thin sheet of metal** (like knife) for scrapping out the extra sand mixture material, **sheet type of metal piece** to mix thoroughly the molten metal, **resin/ waste sugarcane juice** for making the sand mixture paste.³⁹

³⁹ (Baral & and, Brass Work - Aligarh, p. 6)



Raw materials and equipment needed in making Brass Statues, Image Source (Baral & and, Brass Work - Aligarh) <https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>

Method

The first step includes the making of casts by melting the metal and then casting them into different shapes and forms as per the need and shape of the statues. This step is followed by sand making. In this process sand is collected and filtered and then waste sugarcane juice is added to that with a wooden piece, which is also used to fill the same mixture inside the frame of the metal cast. Craftsmen usually fill in the sand mixture by stamping through their feet to level out and the rest is then removed. The other half of the sand mixture dark in colour is then used for the outer parts of the surface.

After the mould is made, hollow capacity is made and is usually made in two parts: the top part or the cope and the lower part or the drag. Then chalk powder is spread on the sand mixture that helps it to stay in place.



Clay is beaten with wooden mallet to convert them into powder, Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



The powder is filtered to get the fine mixture of clay, Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



Sand and sugarcane waste is added to clay and mixed well, Image Source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



The mixture is filled in the metal frame, Image Source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



It is beaten it with rod to settle evenly, Image Source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



Brass articles are placed so that it leaves the impression on the sand for casting. Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



Chalk powder is sprinkled on the mold, Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



Clay mixture is filled in the frame. Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



After the articles leave an impression, a small metal rod hole is made to make way for the metal flow. Image Source: D'source <https://www.dsourc.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>

After that the brass is melted with the help of a blower that helps in regulation the temperature and it is then poured into the mould. It is then left for a while for the metal to cool down and attain the shape.

Open parts in the material are then soldered by melting with brass rod dipped in the white mixture or the solder flux. Then with the help of chisels, different engravings are made on it. Post that it is rolled on a bed of saw dust and wiped and then dipped and washed in a series of liquid solutions; made of water, Sodium and Sulphur which is locally called *Gandag* to give it a smooth and shining finish. The absolute final stage consists of immersing it in borax solution and then drying it after which if there are any protruding or uneven edges, they are filed and rubbed either by using a rag or in machine to give it the finishing touch.



Brass being heated in a furnace, Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



Molten material is poured in the molds. Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



After the moulds are cooled down, the casted metal is scooped out. Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



The mould is then broken, and the casted articles are removed, Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



Separate parts of the idol are then soldered together, Image Source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



The details are then carved using chisels, Image Source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



Idols are buffed to smoothen the surface and bring out the shine. Image Source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



The idols are rubbed in wood husk to give a lustrous effect. Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>



The statues are then washed in borax solutions, Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>

Mostly, the artisans who are involved in this craft make statues of Buddha of different shapes and sizes according to the beliefs in the different schools of Buddhism. But they also make brass statues of other idols and Gods and Goddesses as well as that of animals. Brass statues made in Aligarh are one of the major items of export of this district.



Final product after the brass statue is manufactured and ready to be sent to market. A Buddha statue in *dharmachakra mudra*, Image Source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/resource/brass-work-aligarh>

IDOL MAKING

Aligarh is a significant commercial centre of Uttar Pradesh, where many artisans are extensively involved in making idols of Gods and Goddesses out of Plaster of Paris (POP). Plaster of Paris is a white powder made of Calcium-Sulfate and Gypsum. These idols have a huge demand especially during the festive season. A lot of these idols are also bought by local customers for home decoration purpose. Most of these idols are made in the traditional and classical style. Once made, these sculptures are hand painted and are adorned with jewellery. The meticulous and the precise finish that is given to these idols by the local craftsmen bring life to the sculptures. Many of the sculptures are secular, made solely for art and decorative purpose; while some are deities of a particular faith or religion with diverse postures and symbols.⁴⁰



Plaster of Paris statues; Idols of Lord Ganesha, Image Source: D'source

The raw materials and things needed to make Plaster of Paris idols are: **Plaster of Paris** used primarily as the base material by making a paste by mixing water into it, **water** as solvent, used to dissolve plaster of Paris to make the paste, **oil** for applying on the surface to give a shining or lustrous effect, **rubber mould/ fiber mould** that gives support to the material, **coir/ jute support**, used for tying and holding the rubber mould firmly, **tire tube/rubber strip or tape** also for tying the mold firmly, **paint brushes** used for

⁴⁰ (Baral, S., & M.G., Idol Making - Aligarh, p. 2)

applying water as well as paint on the idol, **enamel paints** for giving glossy finish on the surface of idol, **sparkles or glitter** used for decoration.⁴¹



Plaster of Paris, Paint Brushes, Rubber Mould, Paints used in idol making, Image Source: (Baral, S., & M.G., Idol Making - Aligarh) <https://www.dsource.in/resource/idol-making-aligarh>

Method

First the rubber moulds are given the required design or pattern based on the Plaster of Paste idol that is to be made. The sheets of rubber are then punched through the technique of engraving. After it is done, the sheets of the rubber mould are tied with the help of coir or jute to keep it in place and are then tied with black rubber tapes to prevent the overflow of excess amount of Plaster of Paris paste when poured.

⁴¹ (Baral, S., & M.G., Idol Making - Aligarh), p. 5



Plaster of Paris solution is first made by mixing it with water, Image Source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/resource/idol-making-aligarh>



Rubber moulds are taken and washed in water, Image source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/resource/idol-making-aligarh>



Rubber mould is placed between the Plaster of Paris moulds and then tied together, Image source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/idol-making-aligarh>



Plaster of Paris solution is then poured into the mold, Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/idol-making-aligarh>

Once, the mould is tied firmly, the Plaster of Paris paste is poured. The paste however has to be made in the right consistency and poured at the right time inside the cavity of the mould so it gets the desired shape. In this step proper caution is taken so that the Plaster of Paris is poured within the allotted time otherwise it gets solidified. This solution is then properly and evenly spread and wobbled so that it reaches every corner, and it is then left to dry. After the idols have dried, they are washed properly with water. The stands or the base of the idols are made separately in fibre moulds in the same way as above. After it is made, oil is applied on it to give it a shine.⁴²



After Plaster of Paris is dried up, it is taken out of the mould, Image source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/idol-making-aligarh>

⁴² (Baral, S., & M.G., Idol Making - Aligarh, p. 7)



The Plaster of Paris idols once taken out of the mould are then brushed clean and painted, Image source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/idol-making-aligarh>



The idols are painted with enamel paints and decorated with glitter, Image source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/idol-making-aligarh>

In the final stage, the idols are painted with enamel colour paint. They are then decorated with colourful jewellery and glitter, which enhances the beauty and the look of these sculptures.⁴³

⁴³ (Baral, S., & M.G., Idol Making - Aligarh), p. 8

One of the major reasons why Plaster of Paris idols are bought in large numbers is because it doesn't soften or dissolve easily in water, which on the contrary is not very environment friendly especially when such idols are immersed in the water after any festival. Nevertheless, these idols are in high demand, and they are exported and distributed all across India. The size of the idols varies from 1 foot to 7 feet in length and the cost varies between Rs 50 to Rs 250. During festivals like Shivaratri, Ganesh Chaturthi, idols of Lord Shiva, Ganesh, Krishna idols are sold out. Craftsmen here also make decorative items like flower vases as well as other showpieces.⁴⁴



Apart from statues of Gods and Goddess, decorative pieces are also made from Plaster of Paris, Image Source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/resource/idol-making-aligarh>

⁴⁴ (Baral, S., & M.G., Idol Making - Aligarh, p. 14)



A craftswoman with an idol of Lord Ganesh, Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/idol-making-aligarh>

DECORATIVE DOLLS

Not just sculptures of Plaster of Paris, but also dolls of gods and goddesses in small sizes are an integral art form from Aligarh. These dolls are made from cloth and waste materials. Dolls are also made of deities popular in the local folk culture and belief systems. These decorative dolls are commonly made by the women in villages with locally available materials in small groups.⁴⁵ Usually from dehusked coconut, formica sheets, velvet cloth, decorative laces and silver coated foam sheets.⁴⁶



Decorative Doll of Lord Krishna in embellished and laced fabric, Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/decorative-idols-aligarh>

Raw materials and **equipment** used in the making of dolls are a **dehusked coconut** used to make the head portion of the idol, **fiber fill** which is used as a stuffing inside the velvet cloth, foam sheet used in making the parts of the idol, **thermocool** used as a base for providing support, **adhesive** used for sticking accessories on the idol, a **measuring tape** for measuring length of the cloth, **sparkles** for making the designs and to obtain a shiny look, **hammer and nails** used to secure everything, **lace** for decorating purposes, **velvet cloth** is used as an outline material for the body parts, **sewing needle and thread** for stitching the ends of velvet cloth, **scissors**, **ball pins** for fastening the decorative beads

⁴⁵ (Baral, S., & Lija, Decorative Idols - Aligarh, p. 1)

⁴⁶Ibid, p. 1



The head and the body of decorative dolls of Lord Krishna being made, Image source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/decorative-idols-aligarh>

When all the parts of the doll are assembled, hair made of black woolen thread is glued to the head, eyes and mouth are drawn with paint brushes and the doll is decorated and embellished with colourful beads, laces, and the headgear of Lord Krishna adorned with peacock feathers.



The doll is then dressed, and hair is attached with laced fabric and wool, Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/resource/decorative-idols-aligarh>



The Decorative doll of Krishna is then decorated with jewellery and by putting other accessories, Image source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/resource/decorative-idols-aligarh>

For making dolls of **Lord Ganesha**, first the platform or the base is made. Formica sheet made of wood is cut out and then covered with *shaneel* cloth which is made of material like that of velvet. After that with the reference of paper cut outs of the trunk and the limbs, fabric is cut out this is then stuffed with cotton or any other filler material.⁴⁹



First the body of Lord Ganesha is made, Image source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/resource/decorative-idols-aligarh>

⁴⁹ (Baral, S., & Lija, Decorative Idols - Aligarh), p. 31



In the next step, the limbs and the trunk are made and attached with the body of Lord Ganesha, Image source:
D'source <https://www.dsource.in/resource/decorative-idols-aligarh>



The doll of Lord Ganesh is then decorated with embellishments, Image Source:
D'source <https://www.dsource.in/resource/decorative-idols-aligarh>

After this, the dehusked coconut that makes for the body of the doll, is then covered with decorated and embellished cloth and placed on a thermocol base. The hands and trunk made separately in the previous step is then attached to the body with the help of pins and foam pieces are cut to make ears of the doll. Eyes are then attached, and final touches are given to it by adding intricate details and giving it an enriched and extravagant look with the help of glitter and laces.



Decorative idols are also made for home décor, Image source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/resource/decorative-idols-aligarh>

APPLIQUE WORK

Appliqué work is the most predominant art form of Aligarh. The appliqué work done here is peculiar to this place and distinct from other kind of appliqué works. In this, craftsmen and women cut pieces of cloth of different colours, fabrics and texture into patterns and sew them onto a variety of cloth materials like muslin, georgette, tissue cloth in the form of a design.⁵⁰ This particular craft work is also economical as it eliminates the need to embroider a costlier artwork.



Applique work of Aligarh, Image source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/gallery/applique-work-aligarh-1>

Historically, it is believed that since Aligarh was a feudal centre where many aristocratic families had initially settled, there was a high demand for embroidered clothes of zardozi, zari, aari and moti work. The local narrative says that the *phoolpatti ka kaam* can be dated back to the Mughal era. It is believed by the locals of Aligarh that this work was done on the blouses of the begums of *Nawabs*. Maidens in the court would engage in this activity to appease the begums and later when these families started settling down here, this place became a hub. It is said that this work reflects a Persian influence and Mughal art designs.⁵¹

⁵⁰ (Ranjan & Ranjan, p. 155)

⁵¹ (Ahmed, 2012, p. 23)



Phool Patti ka kaam, Image source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/gallery/applique-work-aligarh-1>

Women have been involved in this craft work for ages so much so that it became an integral part of their identity during the modern age, and in the 20th century, campaigns arose for women's education in Aligarh, as historian Gail Minault opines.⁵²

Initially the appliqué work was done on shamianas or tents, gradually; they came to be done on dress materials. In days of nobility, shamiana and chandowa canopies were appliquéd with waste cloth. In the present times, appliquéd canopies can still be seen but are used occasionally in social and religious gatherings or festivals for decoration purpose.⁵³ These works are also widely used in quilting that is made with both applique and patchwork.

⁵² (Ahmed, 2012, p. 19)

⁵³ Ibid, p. 155



Patch work kind of Applique. Image source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/gallery/applique-work-aligarh-1>

Places near Aligarh Muslim University, in localities like Jamalpur, Hamdard Nagar, Asif Nagar, Firdos Nagar, Bhamola, Loco Colony, Alam Bagh, Puranihungi, Islam Nagar, Maulana Azad Nagar, Zohra Bagh and other areas in the city are the major centres of appliqué work in Aligarh.⁵⁴

In one of the major styles of appliqué work called *phoolpatti ka kaam*, the fabric is cut into motifs of flowers and leaves and then they are hemmed onto the fabric. Stems are embroidered in 'stem' stitch.⁵⁵ Mostly women in the villages of Aligarh are employed in this work. Phool patti work was initially made on organdi and cotton fabrics on which patti was cut out of rubiya cloth, however with the increasing price of organdi fabric, now largely cotton is used.

⁵⁴ (Ahmed, 2012, p. 13)

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.155



Another kind of phool patti ka kaam on rubiya fabric, Image source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/gallery/applique-work-aligarh-1>

Some of the **things that are needed** in appliqué work area **sewing machine** to sew basic stitches desirable for patchwork, **rotary cutting** used with a set of cutter, mat and acrylic ruler, **fabric markers** used to transfer the design patterns on to the patchwork, fabric, **plastic template** for making refillable appliqué, quilt templates, **masking tape** used to mask off certain portions without leaving any residue, **needles** for sewing the material onto muslin, leather, felt, etc, **pins** for fastening materials together with a long form and sharp tip, **thread** for sewing. Thread of cotton for cotton fabric and silk for silk fabric is preferred, **thimbles**, it is used as a shield on finger that drives the needles in sewing and **iron** for pressing cloths to mend creases formed on the fabric.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ (Baral, S., & M.G., Applique Work - Aligarh, p. 4)



Things required in appliqué work, Image source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/gallery/applique-work-aligarh-1>

Method

Applique work is done on garments like the saree, salwar kameez and kurta and kurti, dupatta, stole, scarf; especially the *Phool Patti ka kaam* is most common. Apart from this appliqué work is also done on home furnishings like on curtains, cushions, and bed covers.

All these final products that are sold in the markets are made in local village clusters by women. First, the fabric is cut as per required dimensions and folded to obtain the desirable shape and then they are embellished with sequins called chamkis which are inserted through the fusible technique or by hemming on to the base fabric. The appliquéd pieces are designed and stitched to the base fabric. The appliquéd pieces here are made in the floral and leaf called “*phool-patti*” design. Stem stitch is done wherever the stem pattern of design is on the fabric.⁵⁷In the other kind, fabrics are cut with evenly spaced intervals in a strip of fabric, which is tucked under to leave a row of triangular points like tooth edges. This appliqué style is not peculiar to Aligarh and is practiced by craftsmen in other places and is one of the common appliques that are widely used for border patterns. The strips are then neatly sewn on to the backing cloth; repetitive parts of the pattern are created by folding the fabric before cutting out the shapes.⁵⁸



Required color cotton fabric is first cut into equal measurement pieces, Image Source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/gallery/applique-work-aligarh-1#128585>

⁵⁷ (Baral, S., & M.G., Applique Work - Aligarh, p. 7)

⁵⁸Ibid, p. 7



Applique patterns are made from these pieces. Image source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/gallery/applique-work-aligarh-1#128585>



Cut fabric pieces are folded into required patterns of applique. Image source: D'source <https://www.dsource.in/gallery/applique-work-aligarh-1#128585>



Sketch on the desired design is drawn on the base cloth. Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/gallery/applique-work-aligarh-1#128585>



Backstitch patterns are stitched along the drawn lines as stem. Image Source: D'source
<https://www.dsource.in/gallery/applique-work-aligarh-1#128585>



The pieces of cloth are then stitched on to the main cloth, Image source:
D'source <https://www.dsource.in/gallery/applique-work-aligarh-1#128585>

The demand for the appliqué work of Aligarh in the global market has grown exponentially, which is why we see a surge in the work force engaged in this unorganized sector. From a more women centric workforce, it is getting more diversified as more and more male workforce is also contributing to it.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ (Ahmed, 2012, p. 1)

2. Embroidery Designs: of Patti work



Fig. 5 Patti work



Fig. 6 A patti worker making 'choti patt'

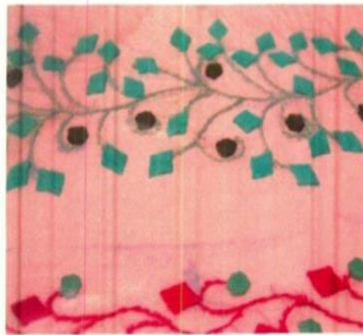


Fig. 7 Bareek patti ka kaam (fine patti work)

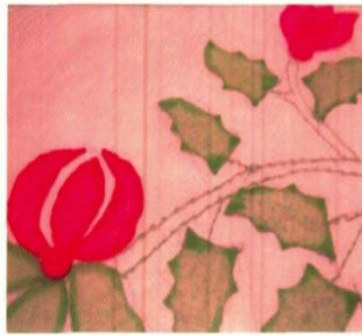


Fig. 8 Badi patti ka kaam (bigger flower design)

Different kind of phoolpatti work on different items of use, Source: (Ahmed, 2012)

1. Embroidered items: of Patti work

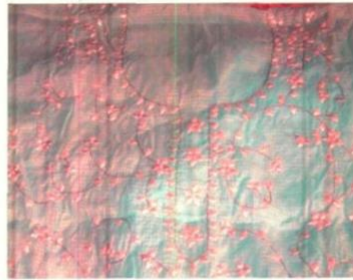


Fig. 1 Patti work on kota chequer fabric



Fig. 2 Patti work on tusser silk

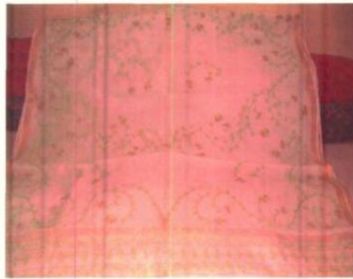


Fig. 3 Saree of patti work on kota chequer



Fig. 4 A semi finished bed sheet of patti work (this pattern is called 'Badi patti ka kaam' while all the patterns in the above pictures are known as 'Choti patti ka kaam')

Phool patti work on bed sheets and saree, Image source: (Ahmed, 2012)

However apart from the *phoolpatti ka kaam*, other kinds of embroidery are also done here, like the **cut work** embroidery and the **karchobi** embroidery.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ (Ahmed, 2012), p. 13



Fig. 17 Women making patti and cut work



Fig. 18 Tracing of design

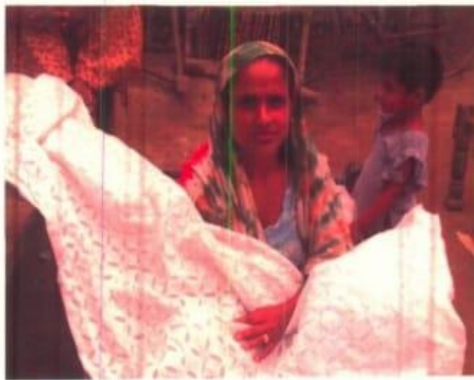


Fig. 19 Women displaying cut work



Fig. 20 Young cut work embroiderer

Women comprise much of the workforce engaged in appliqué work. Image source: (Ahmed, 2012)

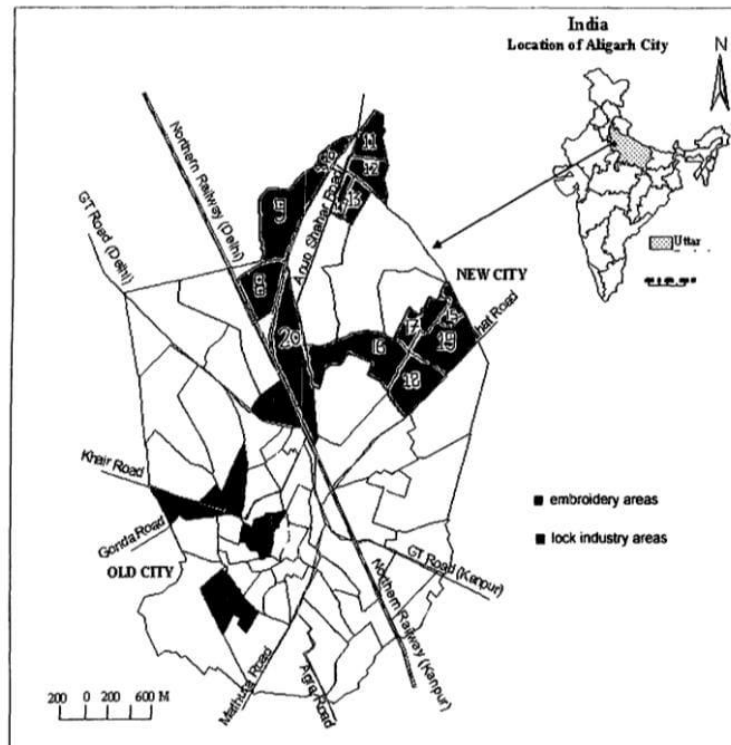
Table 3.1 Piece-rates in *patti* embroidery in the local markets of Aligarh

Items	Piece rates (in Rs.)	Market rate of end product	Hours of labor	Average Hourly wage (in Rs)
Top	15 to 25	125-300	2-6	5.83
Kurta	45 to 55	150-400	10-12	4.54
Dupatta	70 to 220	150- 300	25-40	4.15
Suit	160 to 500	300-3500	40-50	7
Saree	190 to 450	500-4000	60-80	4.39
Bed sheet set	100 to 150	800-1500	40-60	2.5

Source: field survey

Price rates of phool patti embroidery work, Image source: (Ahmed, 2012)

ALIGARH CITY



Source : Municipal Corporation, Aligarh (2007) edited

Lock Area

1. Nagla Masani
2. Nai Basti
3. Usman Para III
4. Shah Jamal
5. Bhujpura
6. Tantan Para
7. Baniya Para

Embroidery area

8. Bhamola
9. Firdous Nagar
10. Moulana Azad Nagar
11. Hamdard Nagar
12. Badam Nagar
13. Patwari Nagla
14. Jamalpur
15. Jeevangarh
16. Dodhpur, Ahmednagar
17. Zohra Bagh
18. Begpur, Islamnagar
19. Kela Nagar
20. Badarbagh, Alambagh, Loco colony

Area-wise distribution of Applique work industry and lock making industry in Aligarh, the two main sectors employing largest workforce in Aligarh. Image Source: (Ahmed, 2012)

Literature

As per the district gazetteer by H.R. Nevill, Aligarh barely had any eminent author or literary figure. In extant Hathras, there was once a king by the name of Raja Daya Ram who was a patron of literature under whose patronage there was one mendicant, Bakhtawar who wrote *Sunisar* in Hindi. Another person who contributed to the field of literature was Daldeo Das who translated the Krishna Khand.⁶¹

Until the establishment of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental (MAO) College, there was very sparse literary production. Under the influence of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, pamphlets, magazines as well as many articles came to be published.

Syed Ahmed Khan was responsible for the establishment of the foundation of the Aligarh Institute and Scientific Society in 1864 that primarily undertook the translation and standardization of Science and History textbooks. This society was instrumental in bringing out a journal called the Aligarh Institute Gazette, which was later resuscitated by Nawab Mahdi Ali Khan and Mohsinul Mulk. Another magazine was printed in Urdu, the **Aligarh Monthly**, covering social news, articles on educational and religious matters. Several other magazines came up briefly like the *Khatun*, an Urdu monthly that dealt with literature and addressed the important issue of female education. Other magazines and weeklies of religious character were the *Al Islam*, *Rafiq-ul-Atful*, a fortnightly magazine for children and *Alamgir*.

Apart from Urdu works, Hindi translations and writings came out profusely under the Bharat Varshiya National Association, founded in 1878 in Aligarh by the Raja of Mursan, Munshi Newal Kishore of Lucknow, and Raja Jai Kishan Das, with the objective of promoting education for both men and women and for bringing out more literature in the vernacular language.⁶² Other than this we don't see any breakthroughs in the field of literature in Aligarh.

⁶¹ (Nevill, 1909, p. 86)

⁶² Ibid, p. 87

Places of Interest

Aligarh is dotted with numerous places of interest that are major spots of tourist attraction. These places talk immensely about the rich historical and the cultural heritage of the district. Some of the important places are:

KHERESHWAR TEMPLE

Situated in Tajpur Rasulpur village, this temple is known for its architectural beauty. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, this temple has a shiva lingam and has intricately engraved ceilings of metallic mural finish.⁶³ This temple also houses brass idols of several other Hindu deities within its premises. This shrine is considered one of the holiest shrines of Aligarh and is widely revered by devotees. It is believed that this temple is almost a thousand years old.⁶⁴



Khereshwar Temple, Aligarh; Image Source: <https://www.tripcrafters.com/travel/tourist-places-to-visit-in-aligarh>

⁶³ (aligarh.nic.in)<https://aligarh.nic.in/places-of-interest/>

⁶⁴ (tripcrafters.com)<https://www.tripcrafters.com/travel/tourist-places-to-visit-in-aligarh>



Inside view of Khereshwar temple, Image source: The Toptours<https://www.thetoptours.com/asia/india/uttar-pradesh/aligarh/best-places-to-visit-in-aligarh>

ALIGARH FORT

This fort was built in the 14th century during the reign of Ibrahim Lodi. Built by Muhammad, son of Governor Umar, in 1525, it represents Islamic influences on architecture. Also known ‘Baunasaar Quila’ or the ‘Ramgarh Quila’⁶⁵, this fort is quite exquisite in its outlook and the polygonal structure of the fort has bastions at each angle and a grand entry gate. This fort has been standing strong through many ages and witnessed many remarkable incidents and the changing power dynamics that unfolded in the district over the years until it finally fell in the hands of the British after the battle of Aligarh of 1803.

Currently managed by the Aligarh Muslim University as a protected archaeological site of the ASI (Archaeological Survey of India), the fort has a lovely botanical garden surrounding it.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ (aligarh.nic.in)<https://aligarh.nic.in/places-of-interest/>

⁶⁶ (aligarh.nic.in)<https://aligarh.nic.in/places-of-interest/>



Aligarh Fort, Image Source: Tripcrafters (<https://www.tripcrafters.com/travel/tourist-places-to-visit-in-aligarh>)



Ramparts of the Aligarh Fort, Image Source: <https://www.nativeplanet.com/aligarh/attractions/aligarh-fort/#overview>



The Botanical Garden inside the Aligarh Fort, Image Source: Trip Advisor.in
<https://www.nativeplanet.com/aligarh/attractions/aligarh-fort/#overview>

ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY (AMU)

Aligarh Muslim University is one of the oldest and most renowned universities of India. Started in 1875 as the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, it became the Aligarh Muslim University in 1920. It is a public central university⁶⁷ that has contributed to some path breaking research works in India. Set up with the objective and mission of providing modern education, Aligarh Muslim University has given some of the most notable alumni.

⁶⁷ (aligarh.nic.in)<https://aligarh.nic.in/places-of-interest/>



Aligarh Muslim University, Image Source: <https://www.thetoptours.com/asia/india/uttar-pradesh/aligarh/best-places-to-visit-in-aligarh>

SIR SYED AHMED MUSEUM

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was a renowned Muslim reformist and educationist who had served the British Government in multiple roles and capacities. He is known to have spearheaded the Aligarh movement and started the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in 1875 that is present day Aligarh Muslim University. He started this movement with the sole purpose of inculcating a modern scientific spirit and knowledge and the benefits of English education among the Muslim community as he saw the lack of it was an impediment for them.

Located in the heart of the Aligarh Muslim University is this art gallery and museum that used to be the residence of Sir Syed Ahmed for a while.⁶⁸This is a repository of artefacts and other collectibles that portray the story of Sir Syed Ahmed and give a glimpse of the history of Aligarh Muslim University as well as that of the district and the city of Aligarh.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ (tripcrafters.com) <https://www.tripcrafters.com/travel/tourist-places-to-visit-in-aligarh>

⁶⁹ (The Top Tours) <https://www.thetoptours.com/asia/india/uttar-pradesh/aligarh/best-places-to-visit-in-aligarh>



Sir Syed Ahmed Museum, Aligarh Muslim University, Image Source: The Top Tours
<https://www.thetoptours.com/asia/india/uttar-pradesh/aligarh/best-places-to-visit-in-aligarh>

JAMA MASJID OF ALIGARH

Jama Masjid of Aligarh is located inside the campus of the Aligarh Muslim University. This mosque was constructed in 1879 by Syed Ahmed Khan. This mosque is widely revered and is one of the largest mosques of Aligarh with a large prayer hall that accommodates almost a thousand devotees during *namaz*. The mosque also bears beautiful inscriptions of the verses from the Quran. Behind the mosque lies the tomb of Sir Syed Ahmed (made in the y1915) who passed away in 1898.



Jama Masjid, Aligarh Muslim University, Image Source: <https://www.nativeplanet.com/aligarh/photos/13859/>



Tomb of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan behind the Jama Masjid, Image Source: http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00routesdata/1800_1899/aligarhmao/jamamasjid/jamamasjid.html

TEERTHDHAM MANGALAYATAN

Located on the highway connecting Aligarh and Agra, Teerthdham Mangal (Teerthdham Mangalayatan) is a Jain pilgrimage complex promoted and developed by Shri Adinath Kund Digamber Jain Trust at Aligarh that does not just cater to devotional and religious purposes but also promotes social service and socio-religious research work.⁷⁰ It is one of the largest temples in India and consists of 5 other temples inside the temple complex dedicated to the Jain tirthankars. The temples of Lord Mahavir, Lord Adinath, Lord Bahubali, Lord Adinath Swami Mansthamb and Lord Jinwani Mandir are the prime centres of attraction and are flocked to by many Jain devotees. This Jain shrine has a calm and serene ambience because of the sprawling gardens and lawns spread over 16 acres of land.



Teerthdham Mangalayatan Complex, Aligarh, Image Source: The Top Tours,
<https://www.thetoptours.com/asia/india/uttar-pradesh/aligarh/best-places-to-visit-in-aligarh>

⁷⁰ (Teerthdham Mangalayatan)<https://mangalayatan.com/what-mangalayatan-means/>

The Five temples inside the complex



Bhagwan Adinath Mandir, Image Source: Teerthdham Mangalayatan (<https://mangalayatan.com/what-mangalayatan-means/>)



Bhagwan Mahavir Mandir, Image Source: Teerthdham Mangalayatan (<https://mangalayatan.com/what-mangalayatan-means/>)



Bhagwan Bahubali Mandir, Image Source: Teerthdham Mangalayatan (<https://mangalayatan.com/what-mangalayatan-means/>)



Bhagwan Sri Adinath Swami Manstambh, Image Source: Teerthdham Mangalayatan (<https://mangalayatan.com/what-mangalayatan-means/>)



Jinvani Mandir, Image Source: Teerthdham Mangalayatan (<https://mangalayatan.com/what-mangalayatan-means/>)

SHEKHA BIRD SANCTUARY

Shekha Bird sanctuary located close to Shekha Jheel in Aligarh is home for thousands of migratory and local birds. Many bird watchers come here primarily during the winter and the spring season to see birds of approximately more than two hundred species and breeds. The lake here is a perennial water body that came into existence after the Upper Ganges Canal was formed in 1875.



Shekha Bird Sanctuary, Aligarh, Image Source: The Top Tours (<https://www.thetoptours.com/asia/india/uttar-pradesh/aligarh/best-places-to-visit-in-aligarh>)

BABA BARCHI BAHADUR DARGAH

Situated close to Shastri Park, this dargah is one of the most famous mosques of Aligarh. Built almost 600 years back, the mausoleum of the Sufi saint Baba Barchi Bahadur is widely revered not just by the Muslims but by people of all religions come here to pay their obeisance as it is believed that the saint fulfils everyone's wishes.⁷¹ Thus, this shrine symbolizes communal harmony. This dargah is considered as one of the most important shrines for the Barelvi sect of Sufism.⁷² Every Thursday, devotees congregate here to offer prayers and *chadar* and attend the Qawwali session.⁷³



Dargah of Baba Barchi Bahadur, Aligarh, Source: <https://gody.vn/chau-a/india-an-do/aligarh/dia-diem-baba-barchi-bahadur-dargah-baba-barchi-bahadur-dargah/ve-tham-quan>



Grave of Baba Barchi Bahadur, Image Source: <https://www.destimap.com/index.php?act=attraction&a=Baba-Barchi-Bahadur-Dargah%2C-Aligarh%2C-India>

⁷¹ (Baba Barchi Bahadur Dargah: A place for all faiths in Aligarh) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4W2BPdoWA>

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ (tripcrafters.com) <https://www.thetoptours.com/asia/india/uttar-pradesh/aligarh/best-places-to-visit-in-aligarh>

Popular Personalities and Institutions

MEHDI HASAN AND THE LEGACY OF *SHERWANIS*

The Mehdis of Aligarh at Tasveer Mahal had set up their shop in the year 1947, the same year India attained independence. They master in tailoring sherwanis for men⁷⁴.

Sherwanis are long-sleeved coats that are mostly worn by men over shirts. These coats are long, they fall below the knees and are buttoned at the front. This was an attire meant for the nobility or the royal family since medieval times.

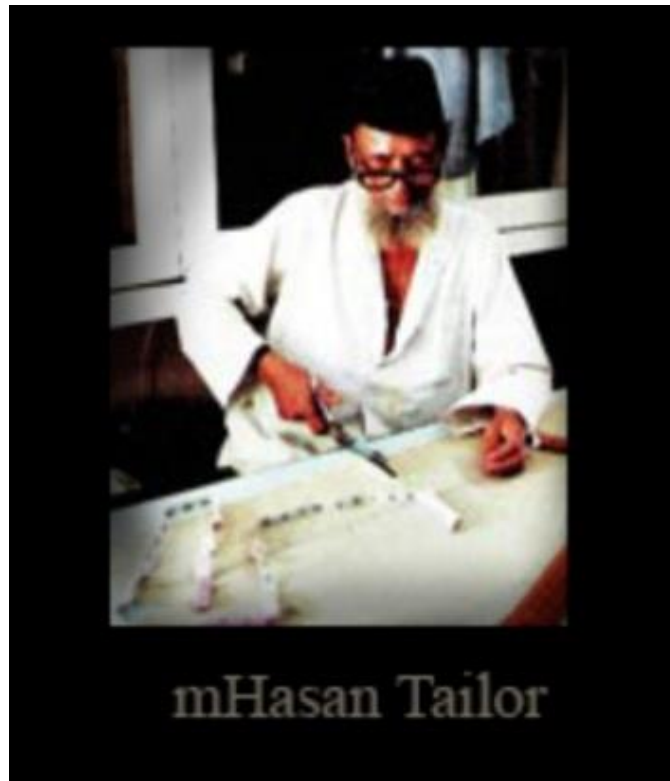


Mehdi Hasan Tailor and Textile Store in Aligarh, Image Source:
https://nicelocal.in/aligarh/utility_service/mhasan_tailor/

The Mehdis of Aligarh have a specialization over perfect hand-fitting of sherwanis and because of their quality and perfect fit and their mastery over the art of tailoring, Mehdis

⁷⁴ (Mehdi Hasan Tailor: Luxury Bespoke Men's Wear) <https://mehdihasantailors.com/>

are one of the leading exporters of sherwanis as they have created a good demand in the international market as well.⁷⁵



Mehdi Hasan, Image Source: Mehdi Hasan Tailor (<https://mehdihasantailor.com/>)

Mehdi Hasan has served as a tailor to former presidents of India like Sanjeeva Reddy, V.V.Giri, and Fakhruddin Ahmed. He is also reputed to have stitched almost 175 sherwanis for the former president of India, Zakir Hussain. He is said to have always donned the sherwanis stitched by Mehdi Hasan in his long political career of seventeen years. Presidents, Dr. Abdul Kalam Azad, Pranab Mukherjee as well as the current president of India, Ram Nath Kovind have also worn sherwanis made by the Mehdis.

⁷⁵ (Mehdi Hasan Tailor: Luxury Bespoke Men's Wear)

Celebrities who have worn *sherwanis* from the Hasan Tailors of Aligarh,

Source: Mehdi Hasan Tailor (<https://mehdihasantailor.com/>)



They also have stitched sherwanis for former Prime Ministers, Jawahar Lal Nehru to Dr. Manmohan Singh as well as many renowned judges of the Supreme Court and members of Parliament. Even Bollywood stars like Saif Ali Khan, Javed Akhtar and many others have donned their sherwanis on several occasions.

It is because of their meticulous work that the Mehdis have received many accolades and are widely acclaimed and appreciated.

Currently, this legacy of stitching sherwanis is being taken forward by sons of Mehdi Hasan, Anwar, and Akhtar Mehdi. In an interview with the '*Times of India*' (TOI), the Mehdi brothers have said that the prime reason that differentiates their sherwanis is the precision that they get in the fit of the sherwanis.⁷⁶



Elder Son of Mehdi Hasan, Anwar Mehdi, Image Source: Mehdi Hasan Tailor (<https://mehdihasantailor.com/>)

It is seen that mostly during the festive season especially during the month of Ramzan, they get maximum orders as many people wear sherwanis to *iftar* parties. Sherwanis have a very regal look which is why people prefer to wear them on special occasions. They get orders not just from across India but from abroad as well; the UK, UAE and Australia.⁷⁷

The Mehdis make their sherwanis from silk wool, polywool and terrawool as these fabrics give a good fitting. According to Anwar Mehdi in his interview with the TOI, *“the art lies in the details while stitching and observing the body type of the customer”*⁷⁸

The Mehdis today do not just limit themselves to stitching sherwanis, but also make kurtas and slim-fit suits, classic-fit suits, Notch Lapel, Shawl Lapel, Peak Lapel and a lot more.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ (Agha, 2014) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/agra/the-mehedis-of-aligarh-sherwani-makers-for-presidents/articleshow/39249820.cms?from=mdr>

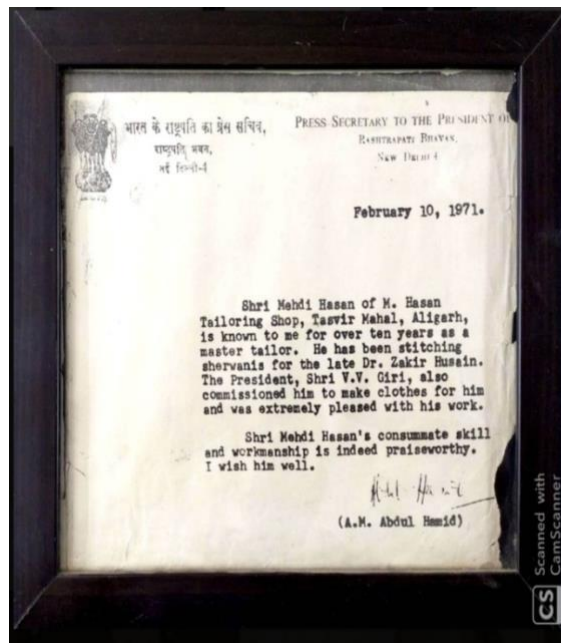
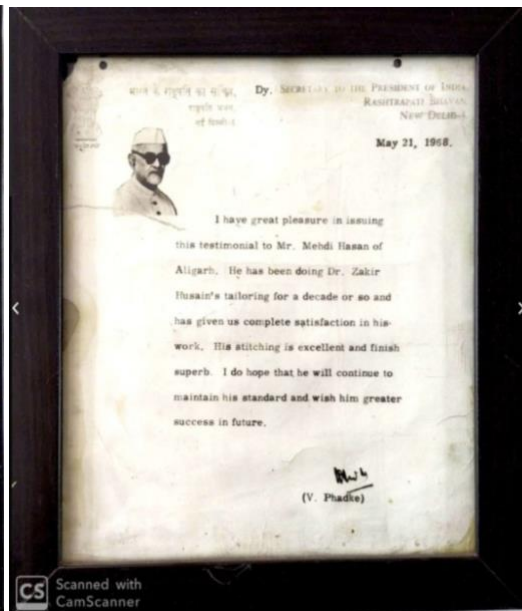
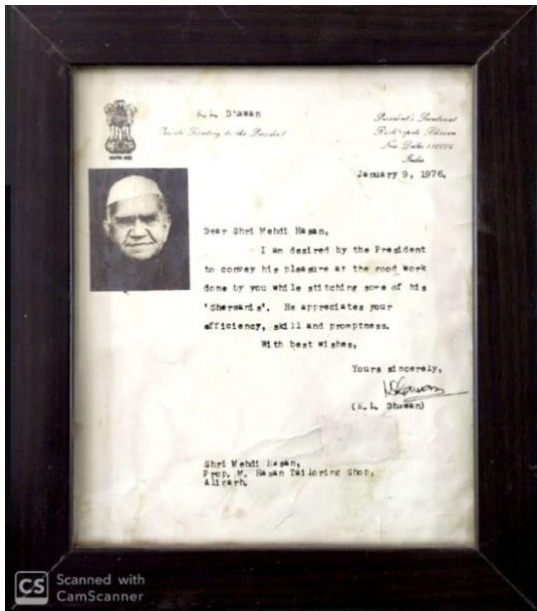
⁷⁷Ibid

⁷⁸Ibid



Sherwani designs of the Hasan Tailors, Image Source: Mehdi Hasan Tailor (<https://mehdihasantailor.com/>)

Tokens of Appreciation for the Mehdis and their Art of *Sherwani* making by the Government of India, Source: Mehdi Hasan Tailor (<https://mehdihasantailor.com/>)



ALIGARH MOVEMENT AND THE ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY BY SYED AHMED KHAN

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan who was one of the leading Muslim reformists and chief educationist, who came from a family of nobles of the Mughal Court, strongly believed in English education and saw it as a medium of regeneration of the Muslim population.⁸⁰ In 1869 when he went to England, he was highly impressed by the English education system and felt that in order to improve the conditions it is pertinent to embrace the modern scientific western form of education. With this mission in mind, he started what is known as the Aligarh movement.⁸¹ Aligarh was chosen by him to be the centre stage for this movement. Syed Ahmed considered English education as a pathway to leading a 'civilized' kind of life and this idea he quite well ventilated in his famous journal the *Tehzib-ul-Akhlaq*.

Aligarh was chosen as the centre for this movement because Aligarh had a strong Mohammedan population and a Mohammedan feudal aristocracy who he thought could give a cordial support to an institution and the fact that fact Aligarh had a strong Urdu speaking population.⁸²



Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, founder of the Aligarh Movement, Image Source: Wikipedia

⁸⁰ (District Census Handbook: Aligarh (Village and Town wise Primary Census Abstract PCA), 2011)

⁸¹ (Jain, 1963, pp. 25, 26)

⁸²Ibid, p. 27

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan believed that it was imperative to bring the Muslim youth and the British administration close and the only way was by the introduction of western education, which would in turn he thought open up new avenues for the young Muslim population. The only way to achieve this was with an institution wherein oriental learning could be reconciled with western literature and science that would make them useful subjects under the British suzerainty.⁸³ Thus the aim of the committee to establish a college specifically for this purpose was resorted to by choosing the medium of education as Urdu.⁸⁴ Thus, the demand had to be created among the young Muslim minds so that the political objective of the Aligarh movement could be achieved which was an equal share for the Muslims as that of the Hindus in the future set up of India.

With this objective in mind, the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College was started at Aligarh on 24th May, 1875, the foundation of which was laid by the then Viceroy of India, Lord Lytton, with Theodore Beck as the principal. The College committee believed that the British rule was benevolent for the Indian subjects and this institution would thus infuse loyalty among the students who would be appreciative of the good will of the British Government.⁸⁵

However gradually, there arose factionalism in the approach and the issue of fund embezzlement which made the members of the college committee divided into two groups. People like Mohsinul Mulk and even Theodore Beck saw the Aligarh movement and the institution as an anti-Congress weapon.⁸⁶ People like Aftab Ahmad Khan who was also a loyalist, however, were against the idea of using the College as an instrument for furthering anti-Congress ideas and saw the difference between the highly paid European staff in the college and the modestly paid Indian counterparts as a strong racial divide and a potential cause of conflict.

However, after Syed Ahmed Khan passed away in 1898, the triumvirate of Theodore Beck, Mohsinul Mulk and Aftab Khan took over and they proposed the idea of converting the college into a university for the Muslims. After Theodore Beck passed away in 1899, when Morrison became the new president, a new plan was devised to make the College into an Arabic college so that the students here could be used in controlling the British empire in the middle east for imperial purposes.⁸⁷ This marked a departure from using western education for the benefit of the Muslims as was visualized by Syed Ahmed Khan. The growing tide of nationalism and the nationalistic fervour

⁸³ (Jain, 1963, p. 37)

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 33

⁸⁵ Ibid, P. 37

⁸⁶ (Akhtar, 2018-19, p. 620)

⁸⁷ Ibid, 621

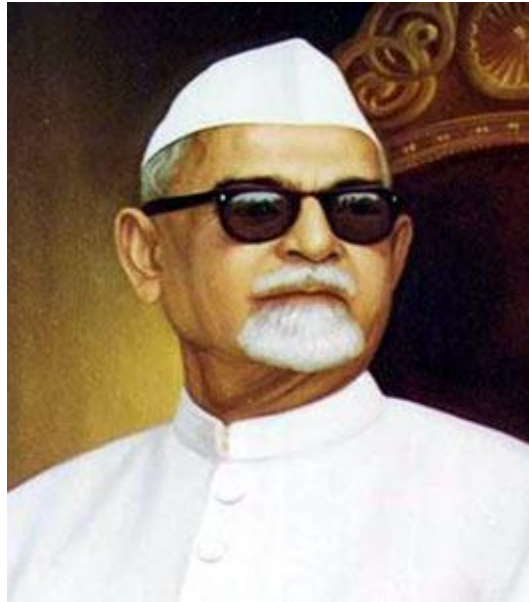
among the generation of young students made them see the European staff as distant and thus not well accepted by the students.

With the turn of the century things began to change. In 1920 when the Caliph was challenged by the British, when the Ottoman Empire was destroyed, and the involvement of the British Indian empire in the World War I happened; all of which led to the rise of the Khilafat agitation. After Mahatma Gandhi had joined hands with the agitation and the clarion call of Non-Cooperation was given in 1920, all British government aided institutions were abandoned and the Aligarh Muslim University was reinvigorated in September 1920. Today Aligarh Muslim University is one of the leading central public universities of India that has given India some of the leading scholars who have done path breaking research and have changed the face of academics and have contributed immensely in various fields.



Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, Source: The Print

Some of the leading alumni of this university are:



Dr. Zakir Hussain, Former President of India, <https://www.amu.ac.in/miscellaneous/alumni>



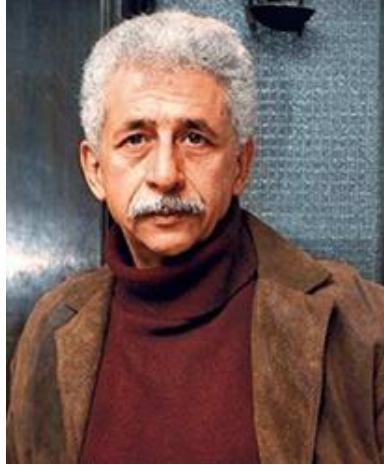
Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, popularly known as Frontier Gandhi,
<https://www.amu.ac.in/miscellaneous/alumni>



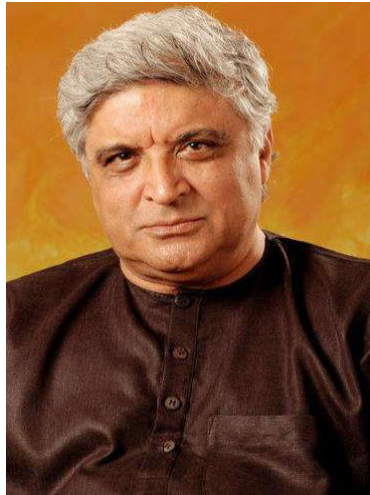
Prof. Irfan Habib, leading historian of Medieval India, <https://www.amu.ac.in/miscellaneous/alumni>



Zafar Iqbal, Hockey player, <https://www.amu.ac.in/miscellaneous/alumni>



Naseeruddin Shah, famous theatre and film actor, <https://www.amu.ac.in/miscellaneous/alumni>



Javed Akhtar, famous writer and lyricist, Source: <https://www.amu.ac.in/miscellaneous/alumni>

Fairs and Festivals

Population of Aligarh is mixed, but primarily consists of Hindus and Muslims; thus both Muslim and Hindu celebrations are quite predominant in this district. As H. Nevill records in the District Gazetteer of Aligarh, Muslim celebrations and festivals like Muharram and Eid are celebrated widely in Hathras, Koil, Khair, Tappal and Mursan divisions in the district.⁸⁸

Hindu fairs are held during Ramlila, which is the largest of all and is celebrated on a grand scale largely by people at Koil, Hathras, Khair, Sikandra Rao and Beswan divisions. Fairs and large-scale congregations are also held in the months of Sawan and Chaitra⁸⁹, months considered holy for Lord Shiva by his devotees.

Another important fair celebrated here is the Barahi fair dedicated to the Goddess Barahi. Another unique celebration seen in Aligarh is the *Phul Dol* festival. On the eighth day after Holi on Chaitra Krishna Ashtami, people take out processions where palanquins are made and decorated with flowers and the deities are decorated and are placed inside the palanquin. People on such processions sing songs dedicated to the deities, the gods and the goddesses, praising the richness of their culture. It is believed that this festival was started in 1900 when after the harvest season and the coming of the spring it was celebrated to infuse new spirit at work. Another aspect of the *Phul Dol* festival is that chaupais are sung to ward off any evil or misery on people or nature.⁹⁰



Phul Dol Festival, Image Source: Amar Ujala

⁸⁸ (Nevill, 1909, p. 64)

⁸⁹Ibid, p. 64

⁹⁰https://hi.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E0%A4%AB%E0%A5%82%E0%A4%B2_%E0%A4%A1%E0%A5%8B%E0%A4%B2_%E0%A4%AE%E0%A5%87%E0%A4%B2%E0%A4%BE

Another interesting fair held in this district as H.R Nevill mentions in the District Gazetteer is more of a commercial nature. Celebrated in the month of February at Banna Devi in Aligarh this fair is mostly attended by traders and dealers from far and nearby areas.⁹¹ The most striking event of this fair is the horse show and flower show. An art and manufacture exhibition is also held which many traders attend, along with many other subsidiary events, like when a competition also takes place between *pahalwans* or body builders. Many shops and stalls are put up and it is one of the important fairs of Aligarh.

⁹¹ (Nevill, 1909, p. 65)

Calendar of Events

Tithis and Calendar of Important Events

NOTE: Exact dates may vary according to the Hindu Lunar Calendar/ Panchang.
Information from **District Gazetteer**⁹² and the **Census of India: Uttar Pradesh, (1961)**⁹³

MONTH	EVENT AND DATE	DESCRIPTION
February	Basant Panchami 5 th February, 2022	According to the Panchang or the Hindu Lunar calendar, Basant Panchami is celebrated every year on the fifth day of Shukla Paksha in the month of Magha. This occasion marks the onset of spring season or the <i>basant ritu</i> and is considered an auspicious day for starting something new. Goddess Saraswati is worshipped on this day and yellow colour is worn by people on this day.
March	Mahashivratri 1 st March, 2022	According to the Puranas, this day is considered auspicious by the Hindus, as Lord Shiva got married to Goddess Parvati. Devotees of Shiva consecrate and worship the shiva lingam by bathing it in a water, milk, ghee, honey and curd mix known as the panchamrita.
March	Holi 18 th March, 2022	Holi the festival of colours celebrated during the spring season is also known as the Vasant Utsav celebrates the beginning of the harvest season. This festival according to the Hindu mythology celebrates the love of Radha and Lord Krishna as also the triumph of good over evil as Lord Vishnu in the avatar of Narsimha had defeated Hiranyakashipu and the connected tradition of Holika dahan is also observed.

⁹² (Nevill, 1909)

⁹³ (Bhatnagar & Verma, Census of India 1961 Volume XV: Uttar Pradesh Part VII B Fairs and Festivals in Uttar Pradesh)

		<p>The festival of Holi is celebrated every year on the day of full moon or purnima in the month of Phalguna.</p> <p>On the eighth day after Holi, people in Aligarh celebrate the festival of <i>Phool dol</i>, wherein deities are decorated and placed in the palanquins which are decorated with flowers and it is then taken out by the devotees in processions.</p>
April	Ram Navami 10 th April, 2022	<p>Ram Navami according to Hindu mythology marks the birthday of Lord Rama, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu in the Vaishnavite tradition. It falls on the Shukla paksha tithi in the month of Chaitra, the first month of the Hindu calendar.</p> <p>This day is celebrated by reciting Ram kathas and by reading stories of Rama and verses of Ramayana. Devotees worship idols of infant Rama and some even observe fasting.</p>
May	Eid-ul-Fitr 3 rd May, 2022	<p>In Islamic belief, Eid-ul-Fitr is celebrated after a month long dawn to sunset fasting in the month of Ramadan gets over and the first three days since is observed as the feast of the breaking of the fast in the month of Shawal, the tenth month in the Islamic Hijri calendar.</p>
July	Ratha Yatra/ Ratha Mela 1 st July, 2022	<p>Celebrated on the second shukla paksha in the month of Ashar, this is a festival where Lord Jagannath goes to his aunt's house Gundicha along with his siblings, brother Balarama and sister Subhadra in a chariot.</p> <p>People gather to pull the ropes of the chariot and seek blessings from God and usually there are large congregations of people that last for seven days until they come back.</p>

August	Muharram 9 th August, 2022	Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar and on the 10 th day, Ashura, is observed the anniversary of the Battle of Karbala where Husain, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad was martyred. Muslims on this day observe fasting.
August	Baldeo Chath 17 th August, 2022	According to the Puranas, Baldev or Balaram is the elder brother of Lord Krishna and is considered as one of the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu. Baldeo Chath is celebrated on the occasion of the birthday of Lord Balarama, who is said to be born in the shukla paksha in the month of Bhadra. Lord Balaram who is popularly associated with the legends of the origin of Aligarh, or as it was primordially known as Koil, is worshipped by the local population of Aligarh.
October	Ramlila 5 th October, 2022	In the month Asvin, on the last day of Navratri or <i>vijayadashami</i> , Ram Lila is performed wherein the life of Rama is enacted based on the Ramayana or from the Ramcharitamanas of Tulsidas. The enactment usually climaxes in the form of the war between good and evil or between Rama and the demon Ravana, the effigies of whom are then burnt with fire crackers. Ramlila celebrations are widely attended by people.
November	Kartik Purnima 8 th November, 2022	Also known as “Tripurari” Purnima or the “Tripuri” Purnima, Kartik Purnima is one of the holiest days of the Hindu calendar. It is observed by Hindus as an auspicious day for multiple reasons, some believe that it is on this day Lord Shiva defeated the demon by the name of Tripurasura, which is why it is known as the “Dev Diwali” or the Diwali of the Gods.

		<p>Kartik Purnima also marks the birthday of Matsya avatar/ incarnation of Lord Vishnu as well as of Vrinda, the personification of the Tulsi plant along with that of Kartikeya, the warrior God and son of Lord Shiva.</p> <p>Kartik Purnima comes at the end of the Prabodhini Ekadashi which marks the end of the four month period during which it is believed that Lord Vishnu sleeps.</p> <p>Annakuta utsav is held, Tulsi Vivah is observed and people go for ritual bathing wherein they take holy dips in the river Ganga, known as “Kartik Snana” and eat satvik food.</p>
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