The name of K.A. Abbas has been engaging a celebrated space in the history of Urdu and Hindi literature, Indian English Writings, active journalism and Indian celluloid writings (Screenplays for Indian Cinema) and filmmaking. K. A. Abbas, an English and law graduate from Aligarh Muslim University, had been seriously and ideologically associated with Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA) and penned scripts, incorporating his socialist vision, for films directed by noteworthy filmmakers like Raj Kapoor and V. Shantaram.

In order to execute the complete performance of his socialist vision on celluloid, he laid down the foundation of his own production company entitled ‘Naya Sanasar’, under whose banner he wrote, directed and produced memorable films like ‘Shehar Aur Sapna’, ‘Aasman Mahal’, ‘Chaar Dil Char Rahain’, ‘Anhoni’ and Saat Hidustani, besides many others. His films have won national and international awards at Cannes, Santa Barbra and Karlovy Vary Film Festivals.
As a literary writer, he enjoys the authority of publishing many literary writings including novels, travelogues, short stories, film scripts and essays in English, Urdu and Hindi. His short stories and novels are translated into many languages of the world. A journalist, creative writer, film and documentary maker, he published close to seventy books in the seventy years of his life, wrote, directed and produced some twenty five documentary and feature films, consistently wrote the ‘Last Page’ for English Blitz and ‘Azad Qalam’ for Urdu and Hindi Blitz for forty long years- record in the history of annals of journalism, besides other journalistic articles. He interviewed some of the greatest people in the world. His autobiography entitled *I am not an Island*, is his specific contribution in producing a literature, that really communicated with the masses. He was awarded with Vorosky Literary award of the Soviet Union, Ghalib award and Urdu Academy special award.

A true son of the soil he upheld his ideals of secularism, socialism and nationalism throughout his life. He remained a champion of the poor and fought for their cause, showcasing their dreams, aspirations, frustrations, oppression, suppression and exploitation, in his writings and films; A staunch believer in secularism, he abhorred obscurantism, caste-ism, communalism and left no stone unturned in exposing this malaise of our society; A true Nehru-vain ideologue, he believed in the development and progress of secular modern India; Being true to Nehru’s statement that the real gauge of development of a nation is the condition of its women and children, he explored extensively, subjects like discriminations, oppression, suppression, exploitation, rape, acid attacks and other atrocities meted out to women in our society and dreamt of their ‘empowerment’ in times when even the word was not coined, just as he made meaningful ‘Art Films’ much before the concept was born

Khwaja Ahmed Abbas completes 100 years of his life on 7th June, 2014. He had said in his will: I will be gone, but I will remain with you in spirit; if you want to meet me, find me in my books, seek me in my last pages, look for me in my documentaries and films. In the hundredth year of his birth we did just that by exploring his kaleidoscopic world, through a multi disciplinary, trilingual
International seminar in all the three languages he wrote and published in- English, Urdu and Hindi, where his Short Stories, Novels, Journalistic works, documentaries and feature films were discussed by the best in the fields of Creative Writing, Journalism and Films.

As we know that Khwaja Ahmad Abbas started his journalistic, creative writing and debating career in Aligarh, while still a student at the AMU, therefore it is in the fitness of things that we at AMU organised this event to honour this distinguished alumnus.

**Festival of films by KA Abbas:** 21st-24th Feb. 2014: The events kick started by a film festival on KA Abbas films, where a workshop was held, highlighting his craft, with iscussions on his art of film making. Following films were shown:

Sri 420, Jagtay Raho, Awara, Aasman Mehal, Chaar Dil Chaar RahaiN, Anhoni, Pardesi, Bombay Raat Ki Bahon Main, Do Boond Pani Saat Hidustani, Giyarah Hazar Ladkiyan, and Neecha Nagar.

**Inauguration of Seminar:** Seminar on “Bread Beauty and Revolution: Exploring the Kaleidoscopic World of Khwaja Ahmad Abbas” was inaugurated by His Excellency the Governor of Uttrakhand, **Dr. Aziz Qureshi** and presided over by the Vice chancellor AMU, **Lt. Gen. Zameer Uddin Shah. Dr. Zoya Zaidi**, the convener of the seminar reintegrated the relevance of the creative genius of Khwaja Ahmad Abbas in the present day scenario, and traced his deep-rooted connection with the AMU, dating back to the times of his great grand father Maulana Alfa Hussain Hali, a poet, critic and close associate of Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of Aligarh Muslim University, to the present day, in her introductory remarks. **Dr. Aziz Qureshi**, in his inaugural address, talked about Abbas, whose concern for the man who wakes up with the first ray of the sun and toils the whole day long, only to return home with the setting sun, was evident in all his writings and films. **Professor Mushir-ul Hasan**, renowned Historian, in his key note address talked about Abbas, the progressive writer and his contribution to the Indian Progressive writings, along with other writers like Sadar Jafri, Asmat
Chughutai and Manto, all alumni of the AMU. He also expressed desire that some one should study and research about the creative contribution of the family including, Maulana Altaf Husain Hali, Khwaja Ghulam us Saqqalain, Khwaja Ghulam us Saiyyadain, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, Prof. Sajida Zaidi and prof. Zahida Zaidi, not only to the University but to the creative world at large. Dr. Syeda Hamid, member Planning commission and founder member of the Khwaja Ahmad Abbas Centenary Celebration Committee, stressed upon the need of revisiting the creative genius of KA Abbas and stressed the relevance of his writings’ in the present day world, hoping that the message AMU has started to spread will go far and wide in the years to come. The inaugural was followed by a presentation by Ms Zakia Zaheer, titled “The Man Who Saw Tomorrow”, on a KA Abbas.

Seminar Sessions: Started with the session on “Creative Genius of Khwaja Ahmad Abbas”. Papers were read by the best in the field of literature: Professors Ali Ahmad Fatmi of Allahbad university talked about Khwaja Ahmad Abbas’ short story, “Meri Maut” or the “Death of Shaikh Burhan Uddin”, about the sacrifice of a Sikh neighbor, who gave up his life to save Burham Uddin’s. A powerful story set in post partition riots in Delhi. Dr. Zoya Zaidi, read a paper on” Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, the man, in the light of his short stories” and discussed the major themes Abbas touched upon in his socialistic writings, with concern for the poor, downtrodden and the marginalized section of the society, who lives in the streets, slums and on footpaths; his compassion for the women exploited, oppressed and suppressed by the male dominated society, the exposure of the corrupt practices prevalent in the society; along with Abbas’ dream of a better tomorrow and Man’s quest for freedom. Prof. Saheb Ali of Bombay University discussed at length the Anthology of Short Stories “Diya Jale Saari Raat” by KA Abbas. Dr. Vibha Sharma of English Department AMU presented a very lucid paper on “‘New Revenge’, Women and narratives of Iconoclasm in Abbas”. Dr. Ghulam Husain from Ujjain, discussed the novels of Khwaja Ahmad Abbas in a paper entitled “Abbas ki Afsana Nigari”. Dr. Rehan Raza, read a paper on the play, “Barister at Law” by Abbas on the South Africa days of Gandhi Ji. The session was presided
over by prof. Beg Ahsaas of Hyderabad University. It was a very lively, well-attended session with papers read with great enthusiasm, followed by lively discussions.

Play: The day concluded with a play based on Khwaja Ahmad Abbas’ short story “Bacchhon ka Khat Mahatma Gandhi ke Naam”- directed by Saeed Alam of Peirrot’s Drama Group from Delhi.

Debate on: “India Has Failed as a Democracy” went on simultaneously in the hard court at the General Education Centre (GEC) under the dynamic guidance of Dr. Sherani.

Day Two of the Seminar: Started with a departure from the normal practice by a brilliant story reading of Khwaja Ahmad Abbas’ short story: “Ababeel” by Mohamad Asjad a research scholar in the English department at the AMU. This was followed by the session on “Exploring the Creative Dexterity of KA Abbas”

Dr. Maula Baqsh of Delhi University read a very lively paper on “Ababeel”, the very first short story of Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, which enjoys the distinction of being chosen amongst the three best short stories of Asia in a German Anthology, along side the short stories of Rabindranath Tagore and Mulk Raj Anand. He brilliantly gave the reference of connotation of the bird Ababeel, described in the Holy Quran as the bird, which drove away elephants that had come to destroy the Holy Ka’ba at Mecca, and which is symbolic of driving away evil. And how these “Ababeel” were instrumental in bringing about the metamorphosis of Rahim Khan, an extremely cruel man who was shunned by the village and finally abandoned by his own wife and children, due to his violent behavior.

Professor Saghir Ifrahim, of Urdu Dept. AMU, presented a paper on the Anthology “Khwaja Ahmad Abbas ke Muntakhib Afsane” by Ram Lal. He at length discussed short stories like “Rupiya Anna Pai”, an experimental story, where the whole story is told by the ledger of a day-to-day expenditure of a man who comes to Bombay from a small town to seek his fortune, “Vapsi ka Ticket” and “Ajanta”, where he did mention the protagonist’s resentment at carving out statues of beauty from the rocks to create art of distraction instead of utilizing
the same time in creating a better human being out of Man, but, he failed to mention the real message of “Ajanta”, which reiterates the message of Bhagwad Geeta of “Karm Kar Phal Ki Chinta Mat kar” (Do your work (Karm) without the desire for reward).

**Prof. Rashid Anwar** discussed the Anthology, “Nai Dharti Nae Insaan” at length. **Dr. Shahina Tarranum**, read a paper on the court case on the story “Sardar ji” and how valiantly Abbas fought and won the case and likened it to today’s censorship of literary works, both by public and law, and how it curbs the ‘freedom of expression’, the right of the writer. **Dr. Siraj Ajmali**, read a brilliant paper on the anthology “Kahtay Hain jis ko Ishque”, a satire on ‘romance’, considered an essential element in short story writing by most of the classical short story writers.

The session was so full of enthusiasm that there was hardly any time left for discussions.

The session was chaired by **Prof. Tarique Chitari** who concluded the session with some very relevant and perceptive remarks on all the papers read and on KA Abbas in general.

**Session on: “Mapping the Non-fiction World of KA Abbas”**

A very lively session ensued after the sessions on creativity, with brilliant papers by all the eight participants.

**Professor Hemendra Chandalia**, of Udaipur University, who had earlier released his book, titled: “Script to Screen, Progressive Vision of K A Abbas”, read a brilliant paper on the subject of his research. He also revealed that how he changed his university because the university he was in, would not allow him to research on KA Abbas. This fact alone speaks volumes about his dedication to K A Abbas.

**Ms Shahida Basu**, read a very heart warming paper on her association with Abbas and his visits to the then Soviet Union (present day Russia), where he was revered only next to Nehru and Raj Kapoor, whom he was instrumental in popularizing, whose every film story, from “Awara” to “Sri 420” to “Bobby”, to Hena and “Mera Naam Joker” were written by Abbas. She also emphasised the fact
that Abbas was widely translated in Russian and other languages of the CES countries. She also talked about her personal experience of watching Dharti ke Lal, Abbas' first film, which he made for IPTA, introducing Balraj Sahani for the first time. Darti ke Lal, a film on Bengal Famine, had the distinction of being a ‘film by the people, on the people and for the people’, without any star cast.

Prof. Rahat Abrar discussed the association of KA Abbas with Aligarh. The session was chaired by prof. Arif Rizvi.

Post Lunch Sessions: There were two post lunch sessions:

“The Meaningful cinema of Abbas Revisited”

Dr. Saba Bashir of Jamia Millia Islamia, presented a very interesting paper on the Socialism and Marxist trends in Khwaja Ahmad Abbas’ films. Where she discussed the popular films of Raj Kapoor like “Awara”, “Sri 420” and “Mera Naam Jocker” as well as Abbas’ own films like “Shehar aur Sapna”, on housing problems in the big metros like Bombay, where people live on the foot path and drain pipes lying on the road side, whose dream of a house remains a dream. “Do Boond Pani” on water problem in Rajasthan, where to date women have to walk miles to fetch a few cans of potable water, among other meaningful cinema like “Asman Mehal” on decadence of Nawabs, “Dharti ke Lal” on Bengal Famine of 1948, which were art films in times when the concept did not even exist.

Dr. Samina of English dept. AMU, read a paper on “Translation from Text to Screen” on short story “Dil Hi to Hai”. She discussed the background of the story, inspired by the infamous Nanawati Murder case, and adaptation of the story by Gulzar, as “Achanak” on the silver screen, the departures from the original story and its effect on the artistic aspects of the film. Her presentation was embellished with slides. Ms. Seemin Kidwai, a student of “Women’s Studies” in AMU, read a paper on “Women in Khwaja Ahmad Abbas’ Films”.

Last Session on: “Appraising the Journalistic Endeavours of KA Abbas”
This last, but not the least, session proved to be most lively with hordes of papers attended by audience and presenters with equally great enthusiasm.

**Mr. Mushtaque Sadaf** from Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, waved a 100 photocopies of Abbas’ Last pages as a proof of his exhaustive research on KA Abbas’ journalistic genius, before reading a brilliant paper on the last pages, insisting that Abbas initiated a new trend in journalism, which can not be judged by any other yard stick than Abbas’ own. That we will have to invent new yard sticks to measure Abbas’ kind of journalism. He also pointed out “There is hardly a subject on earth, which Abbas has not discussed in his ‘Azad Qalam’, the Urdu version of “The Last Page”.

**Mr. Shamim Tarique** of Urdu Blitz Bombay, with great lucidity emphasized the brilliance of KA Abbas’ journalism, and how he learned journalism by reading Abbas’ “Last Pages”, and talked about his few encounters with Abbas in his last days. He also pointed out that Abbas was a Gandhian, who in his last Will wanted his ‘janaza’ to be stopped by Gandhi Samadhi in Juhu, to pay his last homage to the father of the Nation. He also pointed out that the fact that Abbas wanted his ‘Kafan’ to be draped by a sheet made of his ‘Last Pages’ and ‘Azad Qalam’, speaks volumes about his commitment and dedication to the ‘Last Page’. **Mr. Wajih Uddin** talked about the ‘Journalistic genius of KA Abbas’, and impressed upon the audience the fact that he learned journalism by reading Abbas’ last page, which was, incidentally, read the first by all sundry.

This proved to be the liveliest of all sessions where papers were read with great reverence and love for Abbas, lively discussion ensued, the attendance actually doubled instead of dwindling, as usually happens in the seminars in the last sessions.

The session was dynamically presided over by **Prof. Akhtar-ul – Wasey** of **Urdu Academy, Delhi**, who also conducted our **Valedictory session**

**Valedictory Session:** was conducted by the Convener, Dr. Zoya Zaidi, Coordinator, **Prof. Shafey Kidwai**, and presided over by **Prof.**
Akhtar-ul-Wasey. Dr, Zoya Zaidi talked of the endeavours that went into conceptualizing the whole event and expressed satisfaction that her labour of love of last ten months had paid off well. Prof. Shafey Kidwai summed up the Seminar proceedings, while, Prof. Akhtar-ul-Wasey, discussed up the creative genius of Khwaja Ahmad Abbas and emphasized the need to understand and revisit the works of KA Abbas in the present day scenario. The seminar ended on a positive note, where every one from the organizers to participants were sad that the two days of intensive intellectual exercise was over so soon.

An Art Festival went on Simultaneously at the Hard Court of GEC

Report prepared by:

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Convener Seminar on “Bread Beauty and Revolution- Exploring the Kaliedoscopic World of Khwaja Ahmad Abbas”

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28th Feb. 2014