



SIR SYED GLOBAL SCHOLAR AWARD

(Previously Sir Syed Emerging Scholar Award)

Press Release

Date : December 19th, 2020

SSGSA organizes a successful virtual convention: Abhijit Banerjee and Swara Bhasker delivered keynote addresses; AMU VC Tariq Mansoor and Frank Islam were Guests of Honor

On December 19, 2020, in a virtual gathering that marked attendance from over 25 countries and over 1000 participants watching live, the Sir Syed Global Scholar Award (SSGSA) Committee organized its first ever convention. Timed to celebrate the achievements of SSGSA scholars in conjunction with the momentous centenary year of the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), India, the event was a celebration of the power of education, mentorship and peer-support in transforming the lives of students. The convention was kicked off by Mr. Wasikul Islam, Dr. Saif Sheikh and Dr. Rehan Baqri, members of the SSGSA Executive Committee, with an ode to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and an overview of the SSGSA organization, and achievements of its scholars. The host of the day, philanthropist and civic leader, and member of the SSGSA Executive Committee Mr. Syed Ali Rizvi, captured the spirit of event and maintained engagement with the audience, with opportune Urdu couplets and personal anecdotes.

The event featured two uplifting keynote talks by stellar speakers. The first was from the 2019 Nobel Prize winner in Economics, and Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dr. Abhijit Banerjee. Highlighting the educational vision of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Dr. Banerjee emphasized the need to take risks and aim high but to enjoy one's pursuits, thereby highlighting the role of self-motivation for success. He raised the importance of supporting the academic dreams of students and praised SSGSA's efforts towards empowering young minds and encouraging them to endeavor. The second keynote speaker was award-winning actress and activist, Ms. Swara Bhasker who passionately advocated for the need for education to be the guiding light in allowing us to discover our inner humanity. She said that as students and learners, it was important to go beyond academic excellence, to be self-aware and aware of the world around us, and speak up as a 'principled disruptor' to harness the power of student movements to drive accountability and purpose. She stressed the importance of students to live with hope, and not fear, as a guiding force. The two keynotes left lasting impressions on students, alumni and teachers as was evident from the continued feedback and responses on social media channels.

Dr. Tariq Mansoor, the current Vice Chancellor of AMU spoke of the illustrious history of the university and the contributions of freedom fighters and scholars in building an institution that believed in the education and empowerment of men and women in achieving their highest abilities. Focusing on the future and growth of the university in fostering the development of those who will lead in the future, he touched upon the need to give back and the importance of alumni networks. He commended SSGSA as an example of an alumni organization that was contributing to fulfilling the vision of Sir Syed.

SIR SYED EDUCATION SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

(A 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization)

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Exemplifying this passion to give back to the alma mater, was the next speaker Dr. Frank Islam, an AMU alumnus, successful entrepreneur and philanthropist who recently established the Frank and Debbie Islam Management Complex at AMU to support the next generation of leaders. Dr. Islam pledged support to SSGSA, believing in the need to support students that will ultimately not just give back to their alma mater but also strive to drive positive change in the world.

Past and current scholars as Dr. Mohsin Khan, Mr. Shujaut Bader and Dr. Ruchi Dana, shared their uplifting personal journeys of how the SSGSA network of mentors and peers allowed them live their childhood passions and motivations in the form of their advanced degrees as well as the career paths that have ensued. As they themselves take on the role of mentors, their experiences powerfully illuminate how education and guidance can break the shackles of ignorance, gender bias and poverty, transform lives and enable an individual to reach his or her highest potential. In true spirit of nurturing the next generation of leaders and passing on the baton, the leadership of SSGSA was handed off from the current Chairperson and SSGSA alumnus, Mr. Wasikul Islam, PhD candidate at Oklahoma State University, to another SSGSA alumnus and beneficiary, Mr. Salman Bin Kashif, PhD candidate at Clemson University, who will assume the new role starting January 4, 2021.

A rendition of the AMU Tarana from the SSGSA network left everyone nostalgic and yet energized, emotionally connecting the broader AMU community across geographies despite this challenging year. The event culminated with Mr. Ali Muzaffar, SSGSA alumnus and ex-Chairperson, hosting 'Bazm-e-Sukhan', a special session to showcase and celebrate talent amongst SSGSA scholars, in which the legendary AMU music icon Mr. Johnny Foster, and SSGSA scholars such as Mr. Shujaut Bader, Mr. Mohd Zubair, and Ms. Oroosa Anwar enthralled everyone with their musical and poetic caliber.

About SSGSA:

SSGSA began fourteen years ago in 2006 as a vision to empower the brightest minds of the Aligarh Muslim University to fulfil their academic dreams through mentorship and financial support. Born out of the efforts of AMU Alumni based in the USA, the foundational principles of the scholarship have always been to enable meritorious and high-achieving students to pursue their dreams of higher education in the world's top graduate and doctoral programs, without allowing cost and lack of mentorship becoming a roadblock in the way of their goals. Since its inception, SSGSA has grown by leaps and bounds thanks to the contributions of individual and organizational donors and a commitment from the mentors and peers towards sustaining a support network that recognizes and nurtures the brightest minds of AMU on their career journey. To date, 120 SSGSA awardees have been successful in getting admission to top academic institutions of the world, spread across 22 countries.

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