



Centre for Promotion of
Arts and Sciences

Hum Sub

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A leaf from Ferdowsi's Shahnamah

In This Issue

1. From Editor's Desk
2. Khuda Bhaksh
3. Special Article
4. Kala-Vigyan
5. Poem

Quotable Quotes

“Mind is like an umbrella.
It works when it is open”.

James Jeans

From Editor's Desk

PAGE - 2

Our aim through the newsletter is to bring to life great men who lived in our midst, belonging to diverse social groups, and who contributed immensely for the welfare of the society. As mentioned in the first issue of the Newsletter, a beginning has been made with the Bihar chapter. We would move on to the other states subsequently.

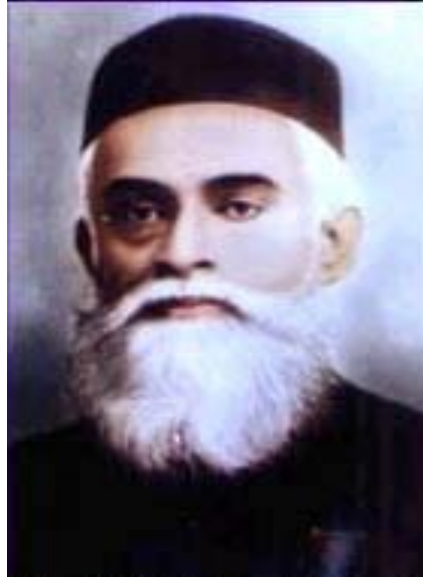
Since some of these great men are well known and often get mentioned in the text books, our aim here is to cover those personalities who have not been given their due. In this issue we cover the life and contribution of **Khuda Bakhsh** who is famous for the oriental library in Patna named after him.

The 'Special Article', in this issue is on '**Annual Floods in Bihar**'. North Bihar experienced one of the worst floods this year in the month of September (2024). There has been a huge loss of life and property. Needless to say, continuous efforts towards mitigating the sufferings of the flood affected people should be made. We invite our readers to send their 'out-of-the-box' recommendations in this context to 'hello@kalavig.com'. We would consolidate the suggestions and send the same to appropriate authorities.

In the section 'Kala-Vigyan' - sub-section 'Arts Corner', we provide a brief glimpse on the travelogue titled 'Revisiting England After Fifty-two Years'. Under the sub-section 'Science Corner' likewise, we briefly discuss about the recently published podcast by the Centre. In the last section on 'Poem', we have once again a poetry written by Manoj Ranjan Sinha.

Sharat Kumar

KHUDA BAKHSH



(1842- 1908)

Khuda Bakhsh Library emerged out of a collection of Maulvi Mohammad Bakhsh and his illustrious son Khuda Bakhsh. The British Museum once made a tempting offer to Khuda Bakhsh for his collection, but he declined saying...

"No, the collection is for Patna and the gift shall be laid at the feet of the Patna public".

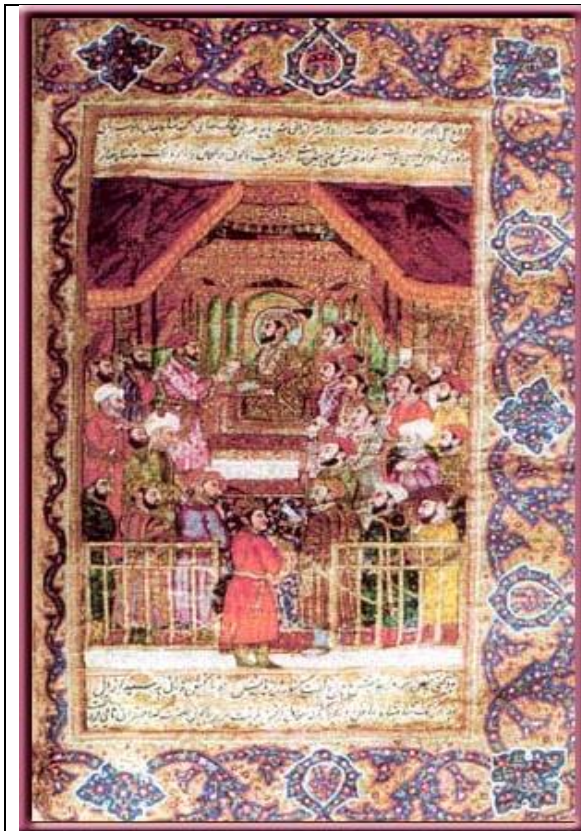
Educated at Patna and Calcutta, Khuda Bakhsh began his career as a legal practitioner. He was appointed the Government Pleader of Patna in 1880 and was later elevated to the post of Chief Justice of Nizam's Court at Hyderabad in 1895 for a period of three years.

Khuda Bakhsh donated his collection of books and the library building to the public, and the Government of Bengal was made its Trustee. It was initially named 'Oriental Public Library' according to the Trust Deed. The people, however, prefixed his name in view of his generosity. Since then, it is officially known as **Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library**. The library contains over 21,000 manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Turkish, Hindi and Sanskrit as well as some manuscripts on Palm-Leaves. In addition, it has more than 2.5 lakhs printed books in different languages and on different subjects.

The library specializes in Islamic Studies, Tibb (Unani Medicine), Tazkira (Biography), Tasawwuf (Islamic Mysticism), Comparative religions, Medieval History, Southeast Asian History, West Asian History, Central Asian History, Medieval Science, Literature on Freedom Movement and National Integration as also Urdu, Persian and Arabic Literatures. The library was raised to the status of

an Institution of National Importance by an Act of Parliament in 1969. It is today an autonomous body under the Department of Culture, Government of India.

Amongst its rare possessions is the richly illustrated "Tarik-e-Khandan-e-Timuriya", the only copy in the world, containing 132 beautiful paintings of 'Akbar the Great' along with a writing of Jehangir.



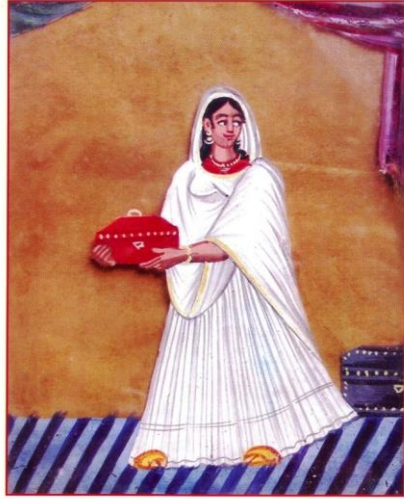
A leaf from Padshah Namah (17th Century). The painting depicts Emperor Shah Jahan sitting on the Peacock Throne, giving rewards to princesses and nobles.



Cover page: Account Book of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (18th Century)

Patna Qualam (*Medieval Paintings by artists from Patna*)

The Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (1618 -1707) appointed his grandson Prince Azim as the Governor of Bihar (1703 -1712). He renamed the capital city of Patna as **Azimabad** and undertook beautification of the city on a large scale. He intended to make the city 'the second Delhi'. Prince Azim, furthermore, patronised painters; some of whom came from Murshidabad and settled in Patna. This art flourished over the years and came to be known as Patna Qualam. A few illustrations of Patna Qualam are shown below.



Lady with jewellery box



A Drum-beater



Huqqa (Water pipe) bearer



Gardener

Special Article

Annual Floods in Bihar

by Sharat Kumar

As high as seventy-two per cent of the total geographical area of Bihar equal to 68,800 square kilometers is flood prone. This year's flood in North Bihar has been one of the worst floods in Bihar. The disturbing sight of people forced to leave their homes, the trouble of taking livestock to safer places, shortage of drinking water and nothing left to eat as a result of the floods have been all captured on video by the media and the various individuals. *May go to the following link to see first-hand the devastation caused by the floods this year.*

<https://youtu.be/ZAKvOTfyUKA?si=coe0dM4nQsv7abGS>

Consequent to the heavy rains in the Himalayan region, all the sluice gates of the Birpur Barrage had to be opened to protect the barrage itself, which led to release of more than six lakh cusecs of water downstream in the plains of Bihar. Together with similar opening of all the sluice gates at Valmiki Nagar Barrage and other barrages, this led to a deluge of water in the plains of North Bihar drowning village after village in the districts of East Champaran, Sheohar, Sitamarhi, Katihar, Madhubani, Vaishali, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Samastipur, Madhepra, Supaul, Saharsa, Khagaria, Begusarai and Bhagalpur. (may see the link below in this context)

<https://youtu.be/Ho0A8s-rNtg?si=3nXLseFjaiER2RfY>

The floods in Bihar occur every year generally during the two monsoon months of August and September (Bhadra – Ashwin under the Indian National Calendar). 'The flood problem is more acute in North Bihar where practically the entire area is flood prone. This area has six major rivers namely the Gandak, the Burhi Gandak, Kamla Balan, Bagmati, Kosi and Mahananda. The southern Bihar also faces floods due to Ganga, Sone, Punpun but the problem is less serious than in the North' (Kumar, 2020)

Prior to this year's flood (in 2024), the major floods in Bihar occurred in 1975, 1978, 1987, 1993, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2014 and 2017. The flood of 1975 inundated a great part of the capital city of Patna, and the water receded from these areas only after two weeks. The flood of 2008 was one of the most disastrous floods as the flood water entered the homes of people unexpectedly residing on the protected side of the Kosi embankment due to the breach in the eastern afflux bundh of the Birpur Barrage on the Kosi River.

Since all the major rivers of north Bihar originate in Nepal and the greater part of the catchment area of these rivers lies in the high Himalayan region, they carry huge volumes of water while descending into the plains during the monsoon season. All these rivers thus overflow their banks during these two months and submerge the whole land area. The reader may go to the link below to understand the topography of these river basins.

<https://youtu.be/BvLLKfkxOE?si=4rltywiA1XAR7n5L>

Since nearly seventy-eighty per cent of houses in North Bihar are "kacha houses" (hutments), these get easily washed away during the floods. The loss in terms of loss of life, standing crops, livestock,

household goods are baffling as they are disturbing. According to the Bihar Government's Flood Management Information Systems Cell, furthermore, floods of Bihar can be divided into four categories:

Class I: **Flash Floods**– floods occurring due to rainfall in the High Himalayas (in Nepal), with a short lead time (8 hours) and characterized by fast receding of flood waters.

Class II: **River Floods**– characterized by a lead time 24 hours and receding of flood waters in a week or more.

Class III: **Drainage congestion in River confluence**- characterized by a lead time of more than 24 hours and lasting for the full monsoon season (i.e. receding of flood water takes 3 months).

Class IV: **Permanent waterlogged area**.

Fortunately, India today has a National Disaster Management Authority with the Prime Minister at its Chairman. It has its branches in all the states; Bihar thus has Bihar State Disaster Management Authority (BSDMA). During floods, all the departments of the State whether that be police, food and public distribution, health, animal husbandry, rural development as well as the District Administration work in unison to do their utmost to protect and provide relief to the people.

Regarding long-term solution to the flood problem in North Bihar, some of the suggestions made have been: (a) carrying out studies in climate change, (b) establishing rainfall and runoff gauging stations in Nepal, (c) conducting River behaviour studies, (d) improving the engineering design of existing flood control structures (Kumar, 2020). One of these suggestions relate to constructing High Dams in the Himalayan region of Nepal on the Kosi and other rivers. Construction of High Dams is, however, contentious since Nepal falls in the high seismic zone and danger to such dams from earthquake is very high.

Perhaps, a better option vis-à-vis constructing High Dams would be to go for afforestation on a large scale in the Nepal region. This would be more cost-effective as well. According to some experts, furthermore, the people in the flood prone areas of Bihar should be encouraged to construct their houses on raised platforms (machan'). This would mitigate the danger of flood water entering their homes. But this is not good enough to protect their cattle and livestock. It may be worthwhile to come up with out-of-the-box suggestions to mitigate the suffering caused by floods in Bihar every year.

Reference:

Kumar, Bibhas* (2020), "Floods: Scourge of Bihar", The National Seminar on Transforming Bihar: Challenges and Strategies, Council for Development of Bihar and Jharkhand, New Delhi.

- Bibhas Kumar is former Chairman, Central Water Commission, Ministry of Water Resources, Government of India.

Kala-Vigyan

Arts Corner

In the last quarter of July-September, we received the travelogue titled '*Revisiting England after Fifty-two Years*' by Meera Verma. As she mentions, it was 'essentially a nostalgic trip down memory lane to the house in Bray's Lane in Coventry (England), which was our first home after our marriage'. In an effort to relive the past, she observes: 'Outside of London, the English countryside with its undulating landscape and green meadows was as beautiful as before. And the sight of sheep and cattle, or an occasional horse, grazing lazily or just lying on the grass, unperturbed by the slight drizzle or short spell of rain, gave a sense of permanence to the scene, as if nothing had changed for a thousand years.'

But then she states, 'What surprised us most was that the people around did not seem to know very much about places and directions and buses, etc. and were therefore not of much help though the old courtesy and the desire to help were still very much in evidence'. She further adds, 'We could not even find the refectory where we ate our daily meals for over a year, nor my own department of Politics. We did not expect to meet any member of the faculty or fellow student of our time, of course, after such a long hiatus'. All in all, the travelogue makes an interesting reading and is a significant contribution towards enriching the Centre.

Science Corner

The podcast: '*Interview with Anuranjan Prasad*' was the first of its kind for the Centre. It was published in the last quarter of July-September. The interview covered Anuranjan Prasad's career as an engineer beginning with his B. Tech. (Mechanical) from B.I.T., Meshra (Ranchi). The podcast brings out the contribution made by him in his different assignments, covering a period from 1969 to to-date.

On account of his various assignments, he went to several countries to help them build manufacturing plants and their railways. In his view, technology has revolutionised every aspect of engineering. The Indian Railways too needs to upgrade itself significantly taking advantage of these changes. As he implicitly observes, the Indian Railways lags behind other countries and should not remain satisfied with what they inherited from the British.

POEM

‘नन्ही सी जान, बेइंतिहा खूबसूरत’

नन्ही सी जान, बेइंतिहा खूबसूरत,
दर्पण में झाँकती और इतराती,
अपनी खूबसूरती पर, रंगीन पंखों पर,
पेड़, पौधे, टहनियां और डाली,
इनका है घर मकान,

फ्लोरा - फौना , जैव विविधता,
यही तो है प्रकृति की शान,
पर अनियंत्रित होती हमारी जनसंख्या
शहरीकरण का भारी दबाव,
और मकान, और मकान, और मकान,

अत्याधिक कार्बन उत्सर्जन,
जंगलों का कटना,
ध्रुवों पर हिमखंडों का लगातार
पिघलना,
असहनीय होता वातावरण हमारा
उखड़ती साँसे, दम तोड़ता इंसान,



(Picture by M. R. Sinha)

वर्षा ऋतु भी प्रलय साथ लाती,
विनाश की है भारी चेतावनी,
प्रकृति को अब और अधिक न सता
ऐ मानव, अब भी संभल जा,
अपने अस्तित्व के लिए ईमानदार बन,

हरियाली, हरियाली, और
हरियाली बढ़ा,
जी जान से अपनी धरा को बचा
ले पर्यावरण सुधर जायेगा,
तेरा जीवन, मानव फिर बच जायेगा,
तेरा जीवन, मानव फिर बच जायेगा ।

Manoj Ranjan Sinha