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A valuable source of the history of Mithila during later 19th century

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Abstract

The contribution of Hindus to history writing in Urdu has special significance since they were a part of the knowledge, which had emerged under the Great Mughals Especially from the time of Akbar onwards. In this context a radical change occurred in the second half of the 19th century. Ayodhya Prasad 'Bahar' who wrote Riaz-i-Tirhut in Urdu made the first attempt in this direction. Riaz literally means Garden. The meaning of the title of the books is gardens of Tirhut.

Keywords: Mithila, Darbhanga, Riaz-i-Tirhut, river, festival, garden, bagh

Introduction

The Author of Riaz-i-Tirhut had the occasion to serve the zamindari of Darbhanga as the keeper of records. During a brief period when he was unemployed, the Author utilized his time by writing an account of Tirhut. The Author tried to describe what he had seen and learnt as a keeper of records during his stay in Darbhanga. The Book was completed in 1867 and published in 1868. It is a pioneering work. For scholars interested in writing the history of Mithila, this book provides a Vast Corps of source materials. The Book includes not only the genealogical account of dynasties, but also the details regarding Socio cultural and religious customs, Practices manners, environment, food habits, animals, arts and crafts etc. The Author's approach is much broader than that of scholars of past centuries who had undertaken the task of writing and recording what had appealed to them a historically significant. Thus, the book records description of different aspects of the life of present districts of Darbhanga, Samastipur, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur, Vaishali, Sitamarhi. Overall this period has great historical relevance as it covers roughly the period of Maharaja Laxmishwar Singh under whom regency Mithila occupied and important place of the national level.

Main Text

The Book is divided into seven sections. It is from the first section of the first chapter that we come across about the generosity of Maharani Maheshwar Lata, mother of Laxmishwar Singh, during the great famine of 1865. The author writes, "In the famine, Thousands of rupees were distributed among the poor, they were given food and houses were also constructed for them. Thus, lives of the people were thus saved. They would have perished due to hunger and disease had the Maharaja not paid attention." The famines of 1865 and again of 1870's are turning points in the history of Mithila. It was for swift communication of food stock outside the district of Darbhanga that rail communication of food stock outside the district of Darbhanga. That rail communication began in April 1874. The rail communication was also started from Muzaffarpur to Sham Shunderpur (Samastipur) from 25th January 1877. The then Viceroy, Lord Northbrook had come to Darbhanga to inspect relief operation in December 1874.

The Author writes about Darbhanga town. The Town is spread in fourteen square miles. Roads are plain, wide and straight Travelling at night is quite safe. Babu Banbari Lal Shahu, Babu Bishweshwar Lal Shahu and Babu Debi Prasad Shahu are traders having very rich stock of Jewelleries. The garh of Maharaja is quite mystical, ornamental having designs with geometrical signs. One simply wonders that the architecture has a philosophical touch.

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Rambagh, Shyamabagh and Dilkhushkun Bagh are three such gardens of the Maharaja that even the care takers of Swarga (heaven) would crave the visiting them.

साक्षात् खुदा की कुदरत का नमूना दिखाई देता है। मन प्रसन्न रहता है। कैसर बाग लखनऊ और कलकत्ता के सरकारी बाग का तमाशा नजर से गिर गया। स्वर्ग के फरिस्तों का दिल फिर गया। आसमान ने तारों की आखों से ऐसा बाग नहीं देखा होगा। दड़मा, लडुआ, किशुन भोग, गोपाल भोग, लाट कम्पी, हलुआ, दलदल, सिन्दुरिया, ककड़िया, खरबुजबा, महबूबकेलावा, भदेया एक से बढ़कर एक अच्छा आम है।

This Book provides valuable source to known about the tanks of Darbhanga town. The author writes that the tanks of this town, which are known as Ganga Sagar, Harahi, Dighi and Laxmisagar are so big that any person standing on the one bank cannot see another. They are in a series from north to south. Each tank has road around it.

There is a Karbala Masjid at a little distance from the north western corner of Harahi, in the west, there is Harahi mohalla, there is a road on its eastern side which goes Laheriasarai and at a short distance from its Southern bank there is Dighi tank on the eastern side of Dighi there is Kabir chak, the tomb of Bukkai Shah is situated on its southern side. Singheshwar Dutt Choudhary has a house at a little distance from its Southwestern Corner and Ganga Sagar tank is situated at distance from its southern bank. Bahadur Ali Khan has a garden on the Southern side of Ganga Sagar.

Ayodhya Prasad Bahar describes about the Indigo Farming, which had become a powerful force in the economy of Tirhut.

The Author has narrated the marriage system of Mithilanchal in general and about Sabha Gachhi in particular. At a time when marriage are held, a festival known as Sabha is held at the village of Saurath, Pargana Hati. About a Lakh or more numbers of Maithil Brahmins gather there.

Joor Sheetal is a popular Lok festival of Mithilanchal. The people worship Shitla Mata, take food cooked in the previous night. From morning to mid-day hours all the people of upper, rich, lower and poor classes play together with mud.

Kamla and Jibacchh are sacred rivers of the region. The man who had no child comes from far-off places to take bath in the holy river of kamla for being blessed with a son. Those people whose children do not survive come with their wives for taking bath in Jibacchh.

The author takes the name of Baba Raja Ram Fakir with great reverence. "The river Bagmati close to Darbhanga Raja Ram Fakir belonging to Nanak Shahi Cult has a math. Baba Raja Ram Fakir had a reputation of doing miracles. It is said that one lady was made to be a male and again was brought back to her original shape by him." This account indicates that Nanak Shahi Cult had developed strong base in Mithila.

Conclusion

The Book RIAZ-I-TIRHUT of Ayodhya Prasad provides reliable source material to prepare the Book on Mithila of 19th Century. Urdu Literature also provides valuable information regarding communal harmony especially in Mithila and Bihar.

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