

Baba Belkhar Nath Dham (The Holy Shrine of Lord Shiva)

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1. Historicity of Belkhar Nath Dham: 'Belkhar Nath Dham', a holy shrine of Hindus, is situate on a hillock on the banks of river Sai near village: Ghorka Talukdari in District:



Pratapgarh, Uttar Pradesh. The shrine is famous for temple of Lord Shiva and is towards north of the village: Ghorka Talukdari at a distance of one kilometre. Initially, the shrine 'Belkhar Nath' was known as 'Bilwasar Nath' or 'Bilwakhhar Nath'. The composite word 'Bilwasar' is made of two separate words i.e. bilwa + sar or khar. Bilwa is a Sanskrit word for the fruit 'bel' (bine or wood apple) and sar or khar is a bush like grass often used for making hutments in rural areas. When there were no pucca houses, people in rural areas mostly lived in hutments made of sar or khar.

Upto the 20th century, Belkhar Nath Dham in a periphery of about two to three kilometres was surrounded by the dense jungle of bilwa and sar/ khar and for that reason, the said place of Lord Shiva came to be known as 'Bilwasar or Bilwakhar Nath'. After dialectic distortions over the centuries in Hindi language especially in *Avadhi* Hindi, the word 'Bilwakhar Nath' came to be spoken as 'Belkhar Nath'.

2. **References of 'Bilweshwar' in different Puranas?:** Some people claim that the shrine of 'Belkhar Nath' has been referred to in the Puranas like Shiv Puran- Kotirudra Sanghita and Ling Puran by its erstwhile name 'Bilweshwar'. Their views seem to be based on the similarity between the words 'Bilweshwar' and its distorted version 'Belkhar'. The relevant verses (*shlokas*) from the Puranas often quoted by the scholars of this school are reproduced below:



बिल्वेश्वरश्च विख्यातश्चान्धकेशस्तथैव च।

यत्र वा हयान्धको दैत्यः शंकरेण हतः पुरा॥

(शिवपुराण, कोटिरुद्र संहिता, अध्याय-2, श्लोक क्रमांक- 24, 25)

विल्वेश्वरस्य माहात्म्यं श्रुणु सुन्दरि सादरम्।

यस्य श्रवणमात्रेण मुच्यन्ते सर्वपातकैः॥

(स्रोतः स्कन्द महापुराण, आवन्तीखंड-5, अवन्तीस्थ चतुरशीति लिंगमाहात्म्य-2, अध्याय 83, श्लोक क्रमांक- 1)

विल्वेशः पूर्वसीमायां सुमद्रतटमास्थितः।

विल्वेस्वर कपोतेशं नमस्कृत्य प्रपूज्य च ॥

(स्रोतः स्कन्द महापुराण, वैष्णवखंड-2, पुरूषोत्तम जगन्नाथ क्षेत्रमाहात्म्य-2, अध्याय 12, श्लोक क्रमांक- 131, 132)

इति मत्वा स वै वृक्षमेकं बिल्वेति संज्ञकम्।

समारूह्य स्थितस्तत्र जलमादाय भिल्लकः॥

(शिव महापुराण, कोटिरुद्र संहिता, अध्याय -40, श्लोक क्रमांक-15)

As is visible from the above quoted verses of the Shiva Mahapuram and Skand Mahapuram, the shrine of Bilweshwar during the age of Puranas was situate on the banks of an ocean in the east of Kashi (Varanasi) and the said term 'Bilweshwar' could have been used by the sage Ved Vyas, composer of the Puranas, only in reference to a Shiv Ling

situate on the banks of the ocean towards east of the Jagannath Puri (Orissa). This geographical location of the 'Bilweshwar' described in the Puranas exists even today in 21st century. The Puranas were composed by sage Ved Vyas soon after the world war of Mahabharat was over about 4600 years ago. References of the word 'Bilweshwar' or 'Bilweshwar Ling' in the Puranas have in fact not been made for the 'Bilweshwar Nath' or 'Belkhar Nath' which came to be established on the banks of the river Sai in district: Pratapgarh but for some other 'Bilweshwar' then situate in the east of Kashi (Varanasi). The undeniable fact has been that the shrine of Lord of Belkhar Nath was for the first time established in 11th century by the Belkhariya Rajpoots. There is absolutely no evidence to co-relate the shrine of Belkhar Nath to the age of Puranas. Since the shrine of Belkhar Nath came into being in 11th century, possibility of its being there into existence 4600 years ago when the Puranas were composed, stands ruled out. Purely hypothetical estimate of any historic event completely bereft of facts cannot be cited as an acceptable fact especially in the absence of any credible evidence therefor. Still, the historicity of the famous shrine of Baba Belkhar Nath Dham having about 1000 years existence is no a less period to give it its due place in the annals of history among the famous shrines of Lord Shiva found in different parts of India.



- 3. River Sai:** River Sai flows from west to east and touching the feet of Baba Belkhar Nath Dham changes its course towards south-east. Sai originates from a lake in district: HarDOI of Uttar Pradesh and flowing through Unnao, Rai Bareli, Pratapgarh and Jaunpur, all districts of the State of Uttar Pradesh, submerges into river Gomti in district: Jaunpur as one of its tributaries.



References of river Sai can be found in olden scriptures like Puranas and even in Ramcharit Manas composed by Goswami Tulsidas in 16th century. Sai was in olden times also known as Syandika and Sarpika. River Syandika is said to be the demarcating boundary of the famous erstwhile empire of Kosala Mahajanpada of the Buddhist era

around 2500 years ago. The reason behind naming this river as Syandika appears to be the ‘sand’ which is found in plenty into its bottom and around its banks. Similarly, word ‘Sarpika’ being a Sanskrit word means female snake. The entire path of Sarpika is so much serpentine and zig-zag that it hardly flows straight even for five kilometres in one direction and frequently changes its direction like female snake and that could have been the reason behind naming it as Sarpika which in its thousands years of journey came to be distorted and spoken in Avadhi Hindi language as ‘Sai’. The jungles and ravines around river Sai have been home to different kinds of serpents, other reptiles, wild life and birds, flora and fauna of different species.

4. Sources and materials: In the absence of authentic sources shedding light on the exact origin and development of the Belkhar Nath Dham situated on the banks of river Sai near villages like Ghorka Talukdari, Khujhi Kala and Yahiya Pur, it is in fact an uphill task for any writer or researcher to record any fact in regard to this shrine with absolute accuracy or certainty. Most of the information about the history of this shrine is therefore bound to be elicited from the hearsay stories and beliefs of the local masses transmitted from generations to generations. The modern researchers interested in eliciting the credible information about the origin and development of this shrine will have to toil a lot to come to any factually correct conclusion emanating from credible or undeniable evidence. In the absence of authentic sources, the task of historiographers to record fact based history of any event or monument becomes quite difficult and so is the dilemma of this author as well. Doing a research work in the darkness of history with no source of light in sight makes the research extremely puzzling and cumbersome. The stories told by the earlier generations and carried forward by the masses to their next generations, their ages old beliefs, unbroken chain of events and prevalent practices including hearsay versions, passed on from generations to generations, can therefore be of some assistance in recording the history of a place or event. The author of this article on Baba Belkhar Nath Dham therefore goes by all such sources as aforesaid in recording the brief account of the historicity of this shrine. Certain speculative work guided by the best of the reasoning and rationale in recording the facts on the subject is also undeniable.

5. The Belkhariyas: Another story behind the naming of the shrine as ‘Belkhar Nath Dham’ is its being related to the ‘Belkhariya Rajpoots’ of the state of Rajasthan.



Belkhariyas were a clan among the vast community of *kshatriyas (thakurs)* of Rajasthan and were great warriors of their times. Belkhariyas were shiv-bhaktas i.e. devotees of Lord Shiva. It is not known as to when and why these Belkhariya Rajpoots migrated

from their native place in Rajasthan and came to settle at Belkhar Nath on the banks of the river Sai. According to one belief, the Belkhariyas had to face starvation for several decades at their native place in Rajasthan due to prolonged drought and their survival became quite difficult there. Belkhariyas, in search of conducive place for their survival and settlement, migrated from Rajasthan and came to Belkhar Nath around 1100 AD, although no concrete and credible evidence in support of the timing of their arrival and settlement at Belkhar Nath is available, but a speculative estimate to that effect made on the basis of the popular hearsay belief among the local populace transmitted from generations to generations, suggests that the Belkhariyas had arrived and settled at Belkhar Nath about 1100 years ago.

One reason behind Belkhariyas' settlement at Belkhar Nath appears to be the availability of plenty of water in river Sai flowing near Belkhar Nath. One more reason for Belkhariyas preferring to settle at Belkhar Nath appears to be the safe and vast hillock of Belkhar Nath and the place was completely unpopulated, un-owned and unclaimed by anyone by that time. Since the place was not under the ownership and occupation of anyone during those days and it was in fact a jungle like place free from interference from the local people then living in its periphery, there was no objection or resistance from anyone against the settlement of Belkhariyas at that place. Treating the place as "no man's land", Belkhariyas made it their home. The period of Belkhariyas at the Belkhar Nath is said to be the golden era of this place.

6. **Contribution of Belkhariyas:** Like any other class of people in Rajasthan, Belkhariyas in Rajasthan were engaged in occupations like farming, animal husbandry and small scale trade and business in carved stones, bamboo and wooden craftsmanship and similar other village artefact. Camels, sheep and goats were the preferred animals of the rural people of the sand-deserts of Rajasthan since long. It was but natural that the Belkhariyas brought their camels and other animals to Belkhar Nath at the time of their arrival. The area around Belkhar Nath was surrounded by dense jungle and was quite rich in fodders like *ber*, *babool*, bushes and grasses which the camels, sheep and goats like to graze. Belkhariyas were accustomed to live a hard life and had ample experience and skill to survive in difficult terrains in difficult conditions. These Belkhariyas gradually developed this place into a small and beautiful township and fortress with all the necessary facilities of those times to lead a comfortable life. They secured the place by digging deep trenches around the hillock and connected the same with the nearby river Sai. These trenches around the hillock Belkhar Nath were in fact like deep water channels and no outsider or invader could have easily crossed it and intruded into the fortress under the occupation of the Belkhariyas.
7. **Architecture of Belkhariyas:** Being staunch devotees to Lord Shiva, Belkhariyas built the temple of Lord Shiva at the hillock and with the passage of time, the same came to be known as 'Belkhar Nath Dham'. The ruins of the pucca structures and well etc. available even today on the mound of Belkhar Nath Dham suggest that the Belkhariyas were fond of living in pucca houses and had ample expertise in erecting such structures mainly built of stones. From the ruins of broken pieces of boulders, bricks called Belkhariya bricks, earthen pots, carvings on boulders, other materials mainly made of clay etc. and used in

building houses and fortresses scattered hither and thither on the mound of Belkhar Nath Dham suggest that the Belkhariyas had enough expertise in designing, planning and constructing comfortable and safe residential structures of their times. The deep trenches around the fortress of Belkhar Nath built by the Belkhariyas were directly connected with the river Sai flowing just in its vicinity and remained full of water. The idea behind fencing the fortress with such a deep water channel around it appears to protecting it from intrusions and invasions of outsiders inimical to the Belkhariyas. The story also goes that the Belkhariyas used to keep vigil against their adversaries and intruders from the hilltop with arrows and bows, spears and swords, in their hands to resist and thwart any such activity from outside. To keep their soldiers protected from any assault from outside, the Belkhariyas are said to have built small protective rooms with roof on the periphery of the hilltop. These guard rooms built by Belkhariyas can be compared to the sentry rooms of modern times built at the entry gate of the Government offices and even in private organizations and structures.



Lakhauri Bricks

8. **Researches and archaeological operations on Belkhar Nath Dham:** People believe that many valuable things of archaeological importance belonging to the Belkhariyas are lying buried under the mound of the Belkhar Nath Dham. Many people claim that quite rich treasure of gold, costly belongings of the Belkhariya Kings and their armaments are still lying buried under the mound of Belkhar Nath. No excavation operations have been carried out to find out for these archaeological assets lying underneath the mound. Dozens of degree colleges with their Departments of Ancient and Medieval History are running in district: Pratapgarh but none of them has so far carried out any excavation operation on this historic place to unearth its mystery and search for the assets of archaeological importance. It is hoped that the newer generations of the historians and archaeologists will one day take interest in making research on this shrine and will come out with many facets of it so far unknown to the world.
9. **Treasure of the Belkhariya Kings:** An interesting story is told from centuries that the treasure of the Belkhariya Kings buried deep in the mound is guarded by the big and fearsome serpents having *mani* (precious glittering gem) in their throat. Anybody who tried in the past to dig the mound and steal the treasure of Belkhariyas was bitten by the dangerous serpents guarding the treasure and had to die. These fierce serpents are described as the dedicated *gans* (soldiers) of Lord Shiva i.e. the mystic and all powerful Lord of Belkhar Nath Dham.

10. Exodus of Belkhariyas: Being warriors, industrious and heroic people, Belkhariyas gradually succeeded in spreading their influence and control over the nearby areas,



became popular and acceptable among the people of the villages in their vicinity. As is believed by many, the increasing influence and acceptability of the Belkhariyas among the local masses was not taken kindly by certain native feudal lords mainly from amongst the local Rajpoots who united to check their growing influence and control over the local population. The Belkhariyas are said to have successfully thwarted several invasions of the native feudal lords and succeeded in defending their small kingdom at Belkhar Nath Dham. The onslaught on Belkhariyas by these

feudal lords, sometimes collectively and sometimes severally, seems to have gradually weakened them as the most of their resources and attention focused on expanding their prosperity and constructive activities got diverted towards defending themselves from these external invasions. This unfortunate development of coming into conflict with the local feudal lords perhaps shook the confidence of the Belkhariyas and they turned to be anxious and susceptible for their future at the Belkhar Nath Dham. Destruction and disappearance of the Belkhariyas of Belkhar Nath is also attributed to the Muslim invaders during the medieval period. Forced by repeated invasions, the Belkhariyas seem to have abandoned the place and either gone to their native places in Rajasthan or elsewhere in Uttar Pradesh or Bihar. This exodus of the Belkhariyas from the Belkhar Nath Dham is said to have occurred any time during 1600 to 1800 AD. After leaving the Belkhar Nath Dham, certain decendants of the Belkhariyas' clan got settled in villages like Shankarganj around Kohdaur Bazaar of district: Pratapgarh and their generations are found living there even in this 21st century.

11. Tombs of Belkhariya Kings: After the shrine was vacated by the Belkhariyas, it gradually returned to its previous condition when it was surrounded by jungles and bushes all around and continued to remain in that condition for few decades. For want of

maintenance, the Shiv temple at Belkhar Nath gradually got damaged and remained in quite dilapidated condition. The shrine for most of the times remained uncared of and unmaintained. After the exodus of the Belkhariyas, the entire shrine premises were deserted look with



Tombs of Belkhariya Kings

small pieces of olden bricks and boulders spread all around. It was in fact sometimes in 18th century when the rulers of the Dilip Pur Estate, who themselves were *kshatriyas* and

the king (ruler) over an area of 14 kilometres radius, got the Shiv temple at Belkhar Nath Dham renovated. Village: Khujhi Kala is situated in the immediate vicinity of the shrine Belkhar Nath Dham. *Kshatriyas (thakurs)* are the dominant caste of this village and are also staunch devotees of Baba Belkhar Nath i.e. Lord Shiva. The credit for keeping the entire shrine premises and the Shiv temple in good condition and maintained on regular basis goes to the enlightened community of these thakurs of the village: Khujhi Kala. The shrine falls in the revenue village: Yahiya Pur which is a Muslim-dominated village and most of the times, Muslims have been elected Pradhan (Chieftain) of this village. During the period from 1975 to 1996, certain disputes in regard to the ownership and occupation over the area around the Shiv temple at Belkhar Nath Dham erupted and some litigations in the Courts of Pratapgarh were also contested by the two communities. These disputes were later amicably settled with the intervention of the responsible people of the two communities living in the nearby villages around the shrine. A portion of the northern part of the Belkhar Nath mound which is at about a distance of 150 meters towards east from the deity of Lord Shiva stalled in the Shiv temple is even today in the occupation of the Muslims. In the absence of any clear demarcation or boundary separating the area under the occupation of these local residents of the Belkhar Nath Dham from the remaining part of the mound, possibility of encroachment and expansion of occupation over the area of the shrine looms large.

12. Lord Shiva, the God of Gods: Indian philosophy recognises three eternal elements in the universe and they are brahm (God), jeev (creatures or living organism) and maya (illusion that does not exist). The two elements- jeev and maya, have no independent



existence of theirs and have their genesis into the brahm as its integral entities under its full control. Brahm, therefore, is the only singular entity spread all around in this infinite universe. Jeev and maya operate in the universe under the directions of the brahm. The origin and end of the jeev and maya is from and into the brahm. This visible or perceivable universe in countless forms by the sensible organs like mind, intellect and wisdom is in fact formless (nirakaar) but still visible in form (sakaar) due to maya. The visible or perceivable universe is thus the body or external manifestation of the brahm. The spiritual scientists, therefore, assert that this universe has come into being

on account of 'Cosmic Dance of Lord Shiva' (Tandava) wherein endless cycle of creation, preservation and dissolution goes on. The visible and illusionary universe attracts the jeev and makes it to indulge in numerous actions (karma) for satisfying its desires. Shiva, the God of Gods, holds into Him all the three eternal elements of the

universe- the brahm, jeev and maya. The word 'Shiva' literally means "well-being". Whose well-being? The well-being of the Self Soul and the universe as a whole, which holds the jeev and maya.

13. Trishul : Shiva holds a Trishul in his right hand. Trishul (Trident) is a composite Sanskrit word made of two separate words: Tri+Shul. 'Tri' means 'three' and 'Shul' means 'point of spear or thorn or suffering'. In philosophical and spiritual terms, 'Shul' means three main sufferings of the world: (1) daihik (bodily), (2) daivik (divine) and (3) bhautik (worldly). Lord Shiva, the supreme master of Yoga, holds this trident in the fist of his right hand which means that a person having attained perfection in Yoga and having reaped its ultimate benefit what is called in spiritual terms 'samatava' (equanimity in wisdom) becomes capable of exercising complete control over his bodily, divine and worldly sufferings and does not allow these three main sufferings to over-power him or trouble him. The trident of Shiva also symbolises the three characteristics of karma (actions) of the jeev in the form of sattvik (constructive or harmonious), rajsik (confusing or passionate) and tamsik (dark, negative or destructive). Any or all of the three characteristics of karma performed by jeev emerge from the churning of life. When the negativity or destructivity emerges from the karmic churning of the life or universe, there is no taker of it and if this negativity or destructivity expands, it destabilises the life and the universe and then only the God of Gods, Lord Shiva, comes forward, swallows and prevents the spread of the negativity and destructivity by retaining them in his throat. This retention of negativity or destructivity in throat means not to allow the negative characteristics of karma to over-power the positive tendencies of life. The nomenclature 'Neelkanth' was given to Lord Shiva after retaining the poison (negative and destructive fruits of actions) in his throat which had emerged from the churning of ocean (life or world) by the gods and demons (righteous and un-righteous). Emergence of poison (destruction) and retention of the same in the mid (throat) in fact symbolises the emergence of positivity or constructivity in life which prevents the spread of the symptoms of destructive actions in the body of life rendering it prone to the three sufferings stated above.



14. Damaru : Shiva holds 'Damaru' in his left hand. The word 'Damaru' is a distorted version of the composite Sanskrit word 'Damru' and when split into its two separate



words, it becomes, Dam+Ru. Word 'Dam' in Sanskrit language means restraint or suppression and 'Ru' means 'sound'. Damaru in philosophical terms thus means: suppressing the voices of negative tendencies coming towards spiritually enlightened person from the worldly affairs and temptations of the physical and sensible organs. An enlightened soul having attained perfect understanding of the futility of the worldly temptations remains indifferent, cool, calm and poised and in the state of equanimity un-impressed by any worldly

attractions. The voice which the damaru produces can be equated with the voice of the Self Soul which always remains pure and detached and counsels to always proceed on righteous path in the world by suppressing the unwanted worldly lusts or desires of the physical and sensible organs. Damaru thus symbolises a musical instrument of yogic spirituality in the hands of the practitioner of spirituality to warn, suppress or keep away the worldly alluring voices (demands) of the physical and sensible organs.

- 15. Third Eye of Lord Shiva:** Lord Shiva, being omniscient and omnipresent, in formless form, can be seen, realized and visualized anywhere any time, or all the time, through the third eye which is the eye of gyan, vivek and vairagya (pure knowledge, pure prudence and pure detachment. Every human being, and perhaps other living organisms too, possesses this third eye but it needs to be opened by pushing aside and cleansing the garbage and diatribe of *karma* (worldly actions) performed by being driven by worldly desires and passions. Third eye of Lord Shiva is in fact not the eye of destruction as is often preached by many while telling the story of burning of *Kaam Dev* by Shiva by opening his third eye. Destruction of *kaam* means destruction of lusts with the help of the third eye i.e. the eye of spiritual vision and wisdom capable of understanding the futility of the worldly affairs attached to the life. Incessant influx of worldly desires, temptations and the trinity of worldly sufferings (*daihik, daivik & bhautik*) can be suppressed, controlled and ultimately burnt (destroyed) by the third eye by a human being and that third eye opens with the emergence of pure knowledge, pure detachment and equanimity in mind and wisdom.



- 16. Ganga and Moon on the head of Lord Shiva:** Ganga originates from Gangotri in Himalayas. The purest water of Ganga is found at the place of her origin at the Gangotri. Once leaving its source i.e. the Gangotri, Ganga-water rapidly flows towards the plains to



Ganga emerging from Himalayas

quench the thirst of the thirsty creatures, flora and fauna of the plains suffering from the scorching heat of the sun. Ganga-water renders the creatures cool, calm and content by mitigating their thirst and heat (sufferings). Soul of the creatures in their living bodies is in the role of the Gangotri. Soul is always full of purest thoughts, purest ideas, purest counsellings and sane voices. A person puzzled and troubled with the excessive pressure of worldly affairs or

negative ideas can seek the pure, cool and sane advice from his self soul and if he has caliber to listen to the sane voice of his self soul, he can mitigate his sufferings and replace the negative ideas and sufferings produced by the uncontrolled desires by coolness, calmness and equanimity offered to him by his self soul. Symbolically, Ganga is held by Shiva on his head (mind) and her water flows downward. Similarly, the pure ideas and the sane advice can flow from the mind of an enlightened person to guide him only when the mind has some connect with its origin, the self soul. The role of the self soul in the body is thus like the role of the Gangotri to Ganga held on head (mind) by Shiva. Moon is believed to hold nectar (*amrit*) into it. Moon is cool and luminous. Moon is believed to be promoter of imaginations and ideas. A person possessing the characteristics of moon into his head (mind) thinks with cool and calm mind which produces positive outcomes like that of the nectar which promotes, not erodes, the life.

17. Role of serpents with Shiva: Serpents around the neck of Lord Shiva signify the different subjects of the five physical and five sensible organs of the creatures / humans.

These organs by reason of their very nature tempt towards their worldly attractions. Despite presence of horrible and venomous serpents around His neck, Lord Shiva, being the supreme master of yoga in the universe, does not feel perturbed and remains indifferent, unmoved and in the state of equanimity. Shiva does not even make any effort to get these serpents away from Him. Shiva simply ignores them and does not take notice of their presence though they are so close to Him and around His neck. This form of Shiva gives a message to the practioner of yogic spirituality to attain that state of mind which does not feel allured,



bothered and moved by the innumerable desires and demands of the physical and sensible organs and to remain unmoved, unimpressed and indifferent to them.

18. Nandi: The bull sitting in front of Lord Shiva, symbolizes a creature/ person who is completely ignorant of all sorts of knowledge contained in holy scriptures. Nandi, the bull, is thus the symbol of ignorance but he is yet sitting there in the close vicinity of



Lord Shiva completely unworried, unwanted and looking only towards Shiva. This posture of Nandi indicates that one does not need too much knowledge, intellect, wisdom, study of holy scriptures, listening to scholarly discourses on religiosity and spirituality etc. for purposes of attaining happiness (bliss) and blessings of the divinity. What is needed is the devotion and dedication to the Supreme Master of the universe i.e. Lord Shiva. Once having surrendered to the wish and will of the Master, the *jeev* (creature) becomes tension-free, depression-free,

sufferings-free, wantings-free and free from all the bodily, wordly and divine sufferings and permanently settles into the state of bliss like Nandi, the ignorant bull, but yet clever enough. What the ignorant but clever bull Nandi attained effortlessly by merely surrendering to his Master could not be attained by many sages, scholars and practioners of religiosity and spirituality despite their life long painful penances.

19. Entrance to the deity of Lord Shiva temple: The shrine has been witness to the rise and



Entrance to the deity of Lord Shiva Temple

fall of many feudal lords, caste and community lords of the area and also the ups and downs of the history and several generations of the people around it. Besides the annual and triennial congregations of Shiv Ratri (teras) and Malmaas (adhikmaas), people from the nearby villages come to this

shrine of Lord Shiva in the month of Shravan (July-August) every year to have darshan and offer their devotion to the deity of Lord Shiva. People of the local areas, mainly women and children, come to this shrine on Saturdays and Tuesdays, to offer *rot* (sweet puri baked in desi ghee) to the deity. Such short duration pilgrimages of few hours is undertaken by the local people as a mark of expression of their gratitude and devotion to Lord Shiva and Hanuman of this shrine for fulfilling their desires or the wish-list called '*manauti*' in vernacular. The ages old belief has been that the Lord Shiva and Hanuman always fulfil the desires and demands of their devotees provided they convey their desires and demands to the sacred deities of this shrine with purity and innocence into their hearts. The attachment of the people of the area with this shrine has also been for myriad of reasons. People passing through the shrine even for their day to day works to the nearby markets and places do not forget to seek blessings of the deities with their folded hands and bowed heads as mark of their devotion and expression of reverence to the deities. Many people of the area claim that their ordinary diseases and sufferings disappeared when they meditatively requested the Baba of Belkhar Nath to cure them and end their sufferings. This abstract devotional bondage between the people of the area and the Baba of the Belkhar Nath Dham is beyond all reasoning, analysis and methods of



Kanwariyas at Belkhar Nath Dham

testing with the application of modern scientific devices and other materialistically devised methodologies of verifications. People belonging to the school of rationalists and monotheists, believers of formless God and atheists too will certainly find it quite difficult to understand this invisible, unverifiable and abstract philosophy of expression of devotion by the devotees of the Baba. The masses in the periphery of several kilometres of this shrine have for many centuries been getting the blessings of the Baba of the Belkhar Nath Dham and this uninterrupted faith of generations continues even today and will continue to bless their future generations irrespective of the impact of globalisation and rapid transformation of the society due to socio-economic and technological revolutions.

20. Yajna Shala: It is the highest building at the Dham. Construction of this Yajna Shala started in 2010 still continues. Yajna is performed here daily. The structure also

accommodates the Durga idol found in excavation. Yajnas are performed for purification of the Self, environment and the universe as a whole. The object behind performing yajnas is to promote well-being of all the flora and fauna including the human beings and the nature as a whole. Benefits from yajnas



Yajna Shala

can be gained only when the due procedure and the methodology for performing the particular yajnas are observed religiously and with pure and clean conscience. Yajna performed without observing the prescribed ritualistic procedure may prove fatal both to the performer and the priest. The warning of Upanishadas and Acharya Chanakya for observing due procedure in performing yajna can be seen in the following hymn and verse:

प्लवा ह्येते अट्टदा यज्ञरूपा ।

अष्टादशोक्तमवरं येषु कर्म ॥

एतच्छ्रेयो येऽभिनन्दन्ति मूढाः ।

जरामृत्युं ते पुनरेवापि यान्ति ॥ (मुण्डकोपनिषद्)

(The eighteen types of yajnas described in Vedas are like the boats made of fragile wood incapable of sailing through the sea. Similarly, the unwise people who wish to attain self salvation by mere resorting to performing these yajnas fail and get proved wrong again and again.)

अन्नहीनं दहेद् राष्ट्रं, मंत्रहीनं च ऋत्विजः ।

यजमानं दानहीनश्च, नास्ति यज्ञसमो रिपुः ॥ (चाणक्य)

(An yajna performed without using pure grains harms the nation, the priest not chanting the hymns correctly and the parishioner or client not giving adequate pittance to the priest

performing the yajna. There can be no greater enemy than an yajna performed with any or all of the said faults or deficiencies.)

21. Idol of Durga found from excavation: In 21st century, an idol of goddess Durga has been found in the excavation of the mound of Baba Belkhar Nath Dham. People claim that at the time when digging of the slope of the mound of Baba Belkhar Nath was being carried out for building the staircases towards the river Sai, the idol of goddess Durga was recovered from underneath the boulders and the earth. The idol recovered from the excavation operations is about three feet high and is made of solid stone. The look of this idol resembles with that of the goddess of Vindhyachal Devi in district: Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh. The experts in archaeology and carving of stones say that the stone used in carving of this idol does not match with the stones found on or underneath the mound of the Belkhar Nath Dham which indicates that the stone used in this idol was either brought from some other places like Vindhyagiri or from Kota in Rajasthan where the Belkhariyas had initially come from. It is also believed that this idol was brought by the Belkhariyas at the time of their first arrival from their native place in Rajasthan and stalled at the Belkhar Nath Dham. The recovery of the idol of Durga suggests that the Belkhariyas were not only devotees to Lord Shiva but also to the goddess Durga as well. The recovery of this idol built of stone from the depth of the mound suggests that after destruction of the fortress and the habitat of the Belkhariyas by the invaders, many structures, valuable articles and idols together with this idol of Durga were buried by the destructionists deep into the earth and underneath the boulders in and around the mound of the Belkhar Nath Dham. This idol of Durga is now stalled in the Yajnashala built in 21st century on the Belkhar Nath Dham by the devotees of goddess Durga. Devotees visiting the shrine of Lord Shiva also visit this Yajnashala and worship the goddess Durga and seek her blessings.



Durga Idol found in
Excavation

22. Annual & triennial congregations: People in the periphery of about ten kilometres of the shrine often come to the Belkhar Nath Dham to have *darshan* (offering devotion to deity and getting blessings) of Baba Belkhar Nath and to have their desires fulfilled by the Baba. A big annual *mela* (religious congregation) is held every year on the occasion



of *Shivaratri* which in local *avadhi* dialect is also known as '*teras*'. Thousands of people from all walks of life throng the shrine on this occasion. Hundreds of shops of sweetmeats, wooden artefact, agricultural equipments, hosiery, cosmetics mainly of the women's use and

innumerable items of the daily use of the local people are stalled on the sprawling mound of the Belkhar Nath Dham. Dozens of snake charmers with their venomous reptiles like cobras, vipers, kraits, pythons, lizards, scorpions, bears and monkeys etc. come to the shrine on this occasion and demonstrate the performances of their creatures to the public. Birds like *titars*, parrots and cocks etc. trained in fighting are also brought by their masters and their fighting is watched by the public, specially the children, with much interest. *Teras* is the only big festive occasion of the area which everybody particularly the children use to wait for. Prior to 1980 AD, *teras* was the occasion when the parents whether rich or poor used to provide to their children new clothes and shoes etc. otherwise during those days when the entire area was by and large living in utter poverty, it was simply not possible for the parents to fulfil the demands of their children for new clothes and shoes etc. The one reason behind the children eagerly waiting for the *teras* festival was this desire of theirs for new clothes and shoes etc. besides getting an occasion to enjoy sweetmeats of their choice in the *mela* of the *teras* and also the different types of shows of reptiles and birds etc.

23. Thakur Shiv Balak Singh & his contribution: Thakur Shiv Balak Singh of the adjoining village: Khujhi Kala was a great environmentalist and lover of nature. He died around 1990 AD in the age of 95 years. Since 1965 and onward, this author used to hear the sound of *ghanta* and *ghariyaal* (large sized bell of metal hanging over deity) every day in the morning between 5.00 to 6.00 O' clock and 7.00 to 8.00 in the



evening when Thakur Shiv Balak Singh in a group of five or six people used to come to the Shiv temple at Belkhar Nath to perform *pooja*, *arti* and *bhajan* (worship, lighting of sacred lamp and singing/chanting verses from holy scriptures). To conclude their *pooja*, the group led by Thakur Shiv Balak Singh used to proclaim at the top of their voice “*Baba Belkhar Nath ki Jay, Bhole Nath ki Jay, Hanuman ji ki Jay, Har Har Mahadev* etc.” People tell that Thakur Shiv Balak Singh used to come to Belkhar Nath Dham to perform *pooja* of Lord Shiva even when ill. Thakur Shiv Balak Singh, being a staunch devotee of Lord Shiva and an environmentalist, planted hundreds of banyan and peepal trees on the Belkhar Nath hillock and converted this place from desert to a green. In the scorching heat of the month of May and June during the period from 1970-1990, Thakur Shiv Balak Singh was often seen fetching water from the river Sai in earthen pots (*ghada*) to water the plants so as to protect them from getting dried up. This great contribution of this ardent devotee of Lord Shiva gave a very beautiful look to the deserted hillock of the Belkhar Nath Dham. The people of the area who are connected with this shrine and their generations to come would remain indebted to this great environmentalist for the noble services rendered by him. The author feels that this invaluable service rendered by Thakur Shiv Balak Singh should not be allowed to be forgotten in the wilderness of history and as a mark of gratitude and homage to this noble soul, some monument like pilgrims shelter or guest house can be built in his memory on the hillock of the Belkhar Nath Dham. Some annual prize and certificate to be given to the persons having made contribution towards the development of the shrine can also be instituted in the memory of Thakur Shiv Balak Singh by the committee/society/trust managing the shrine. It is encouraging to see that Thakur Madan Singh belonging to the dynasty of late Thakur Shiv Balak Singh has been keenly carrying forward the legacy of Thakur Shiv Balak Singh for development of the Belkhar Nath Dham.

- 24. Radha-Krishna Temple:** The grand ‘Radha-Krishna Temple’ built by Mr. M.K. Dubey Advocate, a native of nearby village: Najiyapur and an eminent practising lawyer at the Bombay High Court, has become another centre of attraction for the devotees who come to the Belkhar Nath Dham. Construction of public laboratories on the hillock of the Belkhar Nath for use of the devotees is another great contribution of Mr. Dubey towards the development of this shrine. Similarly, the contribution of Th. Ramanath Singh alias Lallan Singh of the adjoining village: Khujhi Kala and Dr. Karuna Shankar Upadhyay of the village: Ghorka Talukdari who is a noted academician of Hindi Literature presently settled in Bombay and posted as Head of



Radha Krishna Temple

Department of Hindi in the Bombay University, for better planning and management of the shrine made in one form or the other, is also acknowledged and appreciated by the masses around the shrine.

- 25. Vishwakarma Bhagwan Temple:** The Vishwakarma community of the area has built a beautiful temple of the 'Vishwakarma Bhagwan' and a Dharmshala on the hillock of Baba Belkhar Nath Dham. Vishwakarma Bhagwan is believed to be the Master of all the architectural, technological and engineering knowledge and expertise of the universe. Professionals belonging to the disciplines like architecture, technology and engineering worship Bhagwan Vishwakarma as their first adorable god. Ordinary people do also have the same sense of reverence for Vishwakarma Bhagwan. The entire universe visible in innumerable forms is believed to have been created, designed and decorated by the Creator Brahma Ji with the help of Vishwakarma Bhagwan. The temple and dharmshala built by the Vishwakarma Community at the Belkhar Nath Dham is not only used by the members of the Vishwakarma Community but also by the people belonging to the other castes among Hindus for their different purposes.



- 26. Ram Janaki Temple:** A beautiful temple of Ram-Janaki built on the Belkhar Nath Dham in 21st century is another centre of attraction for the devotees. The architecture of this temple represents the combination of the old and modern artistic techniques in constructing the Hindu temples in modern times. The colourful architectural design of the temple is perhaps the best structure erected on the mound of the Belkhar Nath Dham. The temple has been built on the highest part of the hillock and is quite spacious capable of accommodating more than hundred devotees at a time. From the roof of the temple, an area of about five kilometres around Baba Belkhar Nath Dham can be clearly viewed. The area around Baba Belkhar Nath Dham is even today in 21st century full of green trees, bushes and grass and the fascinating river view of the Sai towards its south and the greenery visible all around the mound gives a very pleasant view of the area.



Ram Janaki Temple

27. Muslim population at the shrine:

A few Muslim families are also settled at the Belkhar Nath Dham. When and how these Muslims got settled at the Belkhar Nath Dham is exactly not known. Many believe that their forefathers were Hindus of the local area and had got converted to Islam any time in the past for the reasons the conversions took place among Hindus during the rule of the Mughals and the Muslim invaders.



28. Priests and gardeners of Belkhar Nath Dham:

After the Belkhariyas vacated the mound of Belkhar Nath, it wore a deserted look with no trees, bushes and plants on it. Besides certain houses built of clay and hutments of certain Muslims, Belkhar Nath Dham had two more houses, one of them of a *Malee* (gardener) and other one of a Goswami (priest). These two permanent residents of the Belkhar Nath shrine used to protect the Shiv temple and the area of the mound from encroachments or damage etc. from the Muslims settled over there. The struggle of Thakur Hari Narayan Singh, a native of village: Khuji Kala and an ex-officer of the Indian Army, in protecting the shrine from encroachments and defending the interests of the deity of Lord Shiva of the Belkhar Nath



Dham against the expansionist forces around the shrine has gone in the annals of history and will be long remembered by the people associated with the shrine. The contribution of late Thakur Ram Pratap Singh Advocate, a noted lawyer and native of village: Karmahee near Rakhaha Bazaar, in defending the rights and interests of the

deity of the Belkhar Nath Dham in Courts against the encroachers has to be sincerely acknowledged with homage to this ardent devotee of Lord Shiva of the Belkhar Nath Dham.

29. **Reconstruction of temple of Lord Belkhar Nath:** The major renovation work of the main Shiv Temple undertaken by late Pt. Shiv Harsh Ojha Brahmcharijee 'Naradanandavdhoot' of the nearby village: Ojhan, Yahiya Pur cannot be forgotten for the centuries to come. One interesting story as told by the local people says that at the time of the re-construction and renovation of the main Shiv Temple at the Belkhar Nath Dham, the wall erected by the labourers in the day was seen fallen the next day early morning and this bizarre incident continued to occur several days and the reconstruction of the temple was not being possible for that reason. Brahmcharijee then sat near the site of the Shiv Temple and did not take water or meal for several days and continued his penance to Lord Shiva with the prayer to allow him to reconstruct and renovate the Lord's Temple. Lord Shiva then got pleased and the Shiv Temple was reconstructed and renovated as such during 1990s but Pt. Brahmcharijee lost his life due to this fast unto death. The supreme sacrifice of the Self by Pt. Brahmcharijee for the cause of reconstruction and renovation of the main Shiv Temple at the Belkhar Nath Dham has gone down in the history and will remain alive in the memories of the generations to come. This incident of sacrificing of life by Pt. Brahmcharijee goes to suggest that the ardent devotees to Lord Shiva do not hesitate to sacrifice their life for the cause of their deity. The incident further suggests that the euthanasia or santhara, practices among the followers of Jainism since long, has also been prevalent among the Hindus since olden times and Pt. Brahmcharijee had adopted the same practice in achieving the noble goal for welfare of the people attached to the shrine of Baba Belkhar Nath since generations. The author prays for the noble soul of Brahmcharijee to rest in peace in heavens.



30. **Contribution of social and political activists:** Contribution of Sri Ram Shiromani Shukla, a Member of the State Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh during the period from 2007-2012 and his representative and the social activist Yogesh Mishra Yogi of the village: Pipari Khalsa near Maholi



Bridge on River Sai

Bazaar, district: Pratapgarh in getting a bridge sanctioned and constructed on the river Sai connecting the Belkhar Nath Dham to the areas towards its north and south must be acknowledged as a great contribution rendered by these social and political activists towards the development of the shrine and the entire surrounding areas as well. Contribution of Shri Shivakant Ojha, a native of Birapur Assembly Constituency and former Minister in the State Government of Uttar Pradesh, in the construction of a Pilgrims' Guest House, staircase from the top of the Dham towards river Sai and a road in front of the Muslims' settlement starting from the entry gate upto the Temple of Lord Shiva is also acknowledged and appreciated by the people of the area.

- 31. Entry and exit routes to Belkhar Nath Dham:** Earlier there was no specific entry or exit path built for the devotees coming to this shrine. Zig-zag narrow paths passing through agricultural fields and jungles were there to come to the shrine. It is only in present 21st century when pucca roads have been built connecting this shrine to the town: Diwanganj towards north and Raniganj towards south. An entry gate towards north of this shrine built by Thakur Ajeet Singh, grandson of late Thakur Ram Pratap Singh Advocate, tells the devotees that they have reached their destination i.e. the Belkharnath Dham.



- 32. Hanuman Temple at Belkhar Nath Dham:** Initially, there was only Shiv temple on the hillock of Belkharnath as built by the Belkhariyas. It was infact sometime in the 20th



century that a small Hanuman Temple was built here by someone as mark of his devotion to Hanuman. Devotion of Hanuman towards his mentor Lord Ram has always been unquestionably acknowledged by the Hindus. Hanuman is worshiped by his devotees to get rid of worldly sufferings, protection from adversaries and to gain intellect, wisdom and knowledge besides strength and power. Lord Hanuman practiced celibacy throughout his life. True celibates among monks and sages therefore treat Hanuman as their ideal godly character and observe celibacy in their lives to attain higher levels of inner purity and spirituality. Devotees coming for Darshan of Lord Shiva

at the Belkharnath Dham also visit this temple of Hanuman and express their devotion to him. Pt. Ram Kripal Pandey, a resident of village: Biharganj, district: Pratapgarh, has carried out major renovative work in this Hanuman temple in recent times giving it an attractive look.

- 33. Dharamshalas at Belkhar Nath Dham:** Construction of Vishwakarma Temple by the Vishwakarma Community, installation of idol of Nandi of Lord Shiva by Raj Kumari Ratna Singh, former Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), shed from the entry gate of the shrine upto the Shiv Temple by Dr. Mahendra Singh, a native of Pratapgarh and Minister in the State Government of Uttar Pradesh, to protect the devotees from sun and rains, Dharamshalas constructed by Gaud Community, Saroj Community, Pt. Shiv Prasad Upadhyay of village: Kanpa near Diwanganj Bazaar and late Thakur Raghuraj Singh of village: Khujhi Kala who was a teacher and had taught this author in 1965 AD in class I in the Government Primary School at Shitalaganj Bazaar, will be long remembered by the people of the area.
- 34. Pilgrims' Shelter:** A pilgrims' shelter at the Belkhar Nath Dham was built by Rajkumari Ratna Singh, Member, Parliament (Lok Sabha). This shelter is serving a noble public purpose and will be long remembered by the visitors to the shrine and also by the people of the area.



- 35. Intellectuals' contribution:** It is great to see that the 21st century has drawn the attention of many social and political activists, devotees and intellectuals of the area towards development and modernization of the shrine. Huge contributions made by these noble people of the area has no doubt given a new look to this hilltop lying almost abandoned and deserted for centuries. It needs to be seen that the thrust to give this shrine a new look does not make radical changes and alter its historic look. The on-going massive construction activities on the hillock, mostly in an unplanned manner, may convert it into a township of modern times faced with different types of man-made catastrophes and its original historic shape may get lost in the jungle of concretes and wilderness of history.
- 36. Discourses at Belkhar Nath Dham:** On two major occasions like Shivratri (*Teras*) and *Malmaas* or *Adhikmaas*, which fall every year and after three years respectively, several monks, saints and preachers come to the Belkhar Nath shrine. *Malmaas* lasts for one month and during all this period, several preachers deliver their discourses mainly on

Bhagwat, Ram Katha and Shiv Puraan. Since the Hindu population of the entire surrounding area within a radius of 30 kilometres is dominantly vaishnavite and shivite, hence, the Ramcharit Manas composed by Goswami Tulsidas in 16th century, Puranas composed about 4500 years ago are the favourite subjects of discourses of these saints and preachers. As far as this author recollects since the days of his childhood during the 1960s, several events and stories like Lord Ram's birth in Ayodhya, Dhanush Yajna organised by the king Dasharatha when Lord Ram had broken the bow of Lord Shiva, marriage of Ram with Sita, audacity of queen Kaikeyi and exile of Ram and Sita, devotion of Kevat to Lord Rama on the banks of river Ganga at Sringberpur (seven kilometres from the town Kunda of Pratapgarh district onway to Allahabad), abduction of Sita by Ravana and sacrifice of Jatayu while rescuing Sita, devotion of Sabaree, a tribal women, towards Lord Ram, role of Hanuman, Sugreeva, Baali, Jamwant, Vibhishana, Kumbhakarna, Meghnaad, Mandodari and Ravana contained in Ramcharit Manas are covered by the preachers in their discourses. Similarly, several stories pertaining to the roles of Dhritrashtra, his infamous son Duryodhana, Yudhishtir and his remaining four brothers called *Pandavas*, Lord Krishna, Bhishma Pitamah, Droupadi, Kunti, Karna and their teachers and trainers Dronacharya and Parashurama etc. and how the first known world war on the earth planet i.e. the Mahabharat was fought, are also covered by the preachers in their discourses during the period of Malmaas held at the Belkhar Nath Dham. The majority of the devotees attending these congregations at Belkhar Nath is mainly from among the women of the surrounding areas. Up to 1970 AD, the rate of literacy in the area around the Belkhar Nath Dham was quite minimal and almost nil among the women. The discourses on the subjects mentioned above delivered by the preachers after regular interval of three years during the Malmaas are in fact like refreshers' courses of modern times of 21st century which are often held by many governmental or semi-governmental organizations, mainly by the academic institutions like universities and colleges for their academic staff. The devotees attending these discourses use to religiously follow the guidance provided to them by their preachers and use to observe the ethical values in their day to day activities and conduct. The society since vedic era has been observing the code of conduct propounded by the social thinkers, spiritually enlightened teachers and preachers, saints and monks and that is how an ordained society of humans with adherence to the human and societal values exists since thousands of years. The preachings and guidance imparted by the scholarly *gurus* at the Belkhar Nath Dham were never questioned by anyone and were treated by the masses as the last word of the *gurus*. The wants and sufferings of life almost become meaningless for the devotionists because of the inspirations and preachings of their spiritual *gurus* at the Belkhar Nath Dham. The shrine has been thus playing a very important role in the lives of the masses attached to it. The traces of the traditional Indian culture and adherence to the universally acknowledged human values can even today in 21st century be seen in the way of life of the people of the area associated with the Belkhar Nath shrine. The credit for preservation of these ancient human values in the lives of people of the area unquestionably goes to these selfless preachers, saints and gurus who adorn the shrine after every three years during the Malmaas and educate the people by their religious and spiritual preachings on variety of subjects which helps them to manage the life in a meaningful manner. The author wishes that more and more spiritually enlightened preachers from among the monks and saints spread across India

and abroad should be requested to come to this shrine during the Malmaas to teach the masses to follow righteous path in every walk of life so that the traditional human values of the ancient Indian culture do not disappear and are preserved and seen in the lives of the masses. The growing detachment from the traditional cultural and human values in the lives of the younger generations of the modern 21st century should be a matter of concern for all the righteous thinking people. To prevent the negative impact of the globalization, socio-economic transformation of the society, revolution in technology and the rapid communication systems of modern times etc. on the lives of the younger generations, the preachings and guidance of the spiritually enlightened *gurus* are relevant even in the present times. The author hopes that the historic sacred shrine of the Belkhar Nath Dham will continue to spread the light of religiosity, spirituality, noble human and ethical values of the ancient Indian culture in the lives of the people associated with it in any form.

- 37. Spreading spiritual and cultural awareness:** Organising periodical events like the vanished *Shastrarth* (academic debates), debates among the teachers and students of the colleges of Pratapgarh on subjects like: (i) preservation of values of Indian culture: challenges and solutions, (ii) role of elderly in the society, (iii) rituals and religious practices: expectations from modern generations, (iv) competitive essays and debates among college students on preachings of Ramayana and Gita, (v) history of Belkhar Nath Dham, (vi) possibility of development of the shrine of Belkhar Nath Dham: futuristic vision and planning and (vii) many other such subjects may give a new identity to the shrine and serve a noble cause towards the renaissance of the healthy traditional values of the Indian culture.
- 38. Awards and certificates:** Awarding prizes and certificates to the winner students of such essays and debates will encourage them to excel in expanding their knowledge in the matters concerning the human and cultural values of our society. The shrine of Belkhar Nath may gradually develop as a centre of healthy debates and researches on such noble subjects. People around the shrine are capable enough to bear the burden of organising such events if inspired and honoured for such acts.
- 39. Museum & library at Belkhar Nath Dham:** Parts of one or two Dharamshalas built on the Belkhar Nath Dham if converted into mini Museum and library, can be a great centre of attraction for the devotees coming to this shrine and may help in spreading awareness about the historicity of the shrine and the rich treasure of moral, ethical and human values contained in olden scriptures of the Hinduism. People looking after the managerial affairs of the shrine can give a new identity to this shrine if the bits, bricks, ruins and remains etc. of archaeological importance left behind after exodus of the Belkhariyas from this place are preserved in such a Museum at the Belkhar Nath Dham. The library with the compilation of the holy scriptures of the ancient past, works of noted saints and scholars on religious, spiritual and cultural subjects, magazines published periodically by different organisations covering subjects of social, religious and spiritual importance, can play quite important role in educating the newer generations in such subjects which are fast depleting.

40. Belkhar Nath Mahotsava: Organizing an annual event like “Belkhar Nath Mahotsava” at the Belkhar Nath Dham can be one such occasion which may attract the people of the area settled in different parts of India and abroad. Such an event may last for two-three days or a week and can be used by the Managers of the shrine also as a ‘donations collecting event’. A saving bank account opened in some local bank in the name of the revered deity of the shrine i.e. ‘Baba Belkhar Nath’ should be notified on Google and displayed on some board on the side wall of the entry gate of the temple of Lord Shiva requesting the devotees to donate online into the said saving account of Baba Belkhar Nath for proper management and development of the shrine. The devotees of Baba Belkhar Nath settled in different parts of the country and abroad would not fail and shy away in making their contributions into such saving bank account of the Baba for the noble cause. It will be proper for the management of the shrine to annually publish the receipts and expenditures made in managing the affairs of the shrine and its development.
