



It is World Speech Day!

World Speech Day, observed annually on March 15, celebrates the power of words to inspire change and spark meaningful conversations. The day encourages individuals from all walks of life to share ideas that can positively impact communities and society at large. From classrooms and boardrooms to public forums, speeches have long shaped history and influenced progress. World Speech Day highlights the importance of dialogue, leadership and free expression in building a better future. It serves as a reminder that every voice carries potential, and that thoughtful, courageous communication can drive transformation across the world.



Bairam Khan at the 1557 Siege of Mankot.



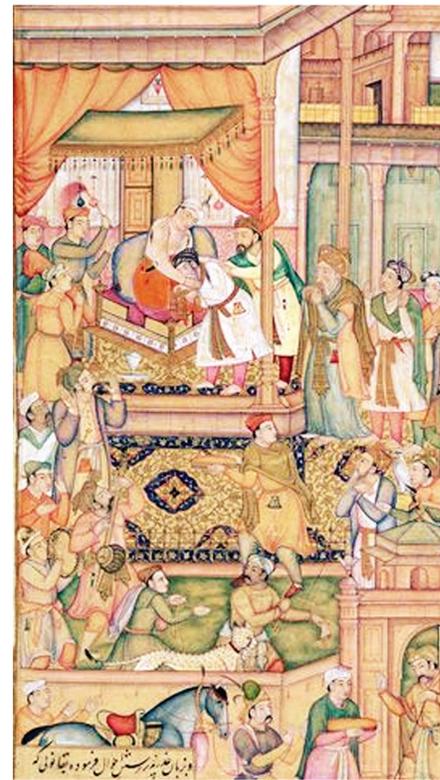
Bairam Khan (center) at the Siege of Mankot (1557).

Respect, Intrigue And Then Death



Sahastralinga Tank.

At Patan, Bairam visited the Sahastralinga Tank (which still exists), where he was recognized by a gang of Afghans loyal to Hemu, whom Bairam had defeated and killed at the Panipat battle. He was set upon by the Afghans and stabbed to death. Haji Khan planned his attack and killed Bairam Khan in order to take revenge for Emperor Hemu's death. Haji Khan Mewati was from Alwar and he had been a general of Hemu, and had been staying at Patan after his defeat by Akbar's forces and the capture of Alwar sarkar in 1559. There was no one to bury his body, which lay unattended "in the dust and in his blood...till some fakirs and poor men lifted up his bloody corpse and committed it to earth," writes Abul Fazl.



Bairam Khan submits to Akbar.



Bairam Khan assassinated in Patan.

• Kshema Jatuhkarna

This is the story of great men, living an ordinary man's life and weaknesses. Bairam Khan (1510-1561) was born in Badakshan in Central Asia and was of Turki lineage. Bairam Beg, as he was called in early days, belonged to the Baharu Turkoman clan of the Kara Koyunlu confederation. The Kara Koyunlu had ruled Western Persia for decades before being overthrown by their Ak Koyunlu rivals. Bairam Khan's father, Seyfali Beg Baharu, and grandfather, Janali Beg Baharu, had been part of Babur's service. His great-grandparents were Pirali Beg Baharu and his wife, a daughter of the Kara Qoyunlu ruler Qara Iskander; Piroli's niece through his sister Pasha Begum had been one of the wives of Babur.

At the time of Humayun's death on 27 January 1556, Bairam Khan was leading a campaign against Sikandar Shah Suri in Punjab (in present-day India) as the then Prince Akbar's ataliq (guardian) and sipahsalar (commander-in-chief) of the Mughal army. To consolidate the Mughal Empire, Bairam Khan kept Humayun's death a secret, sending reassuring messages of his recovery and having Mullah Bekasi, a loyal cleric in Delhi (who looked similar to Humayun) dressed up in the imperial robes and make the usual daily appearance before the people from the balcony of the fort, till Akbar's coronation. He also secured the loyalty of his rival, Tardi Beg, by appointing him as the governor of Delhi.

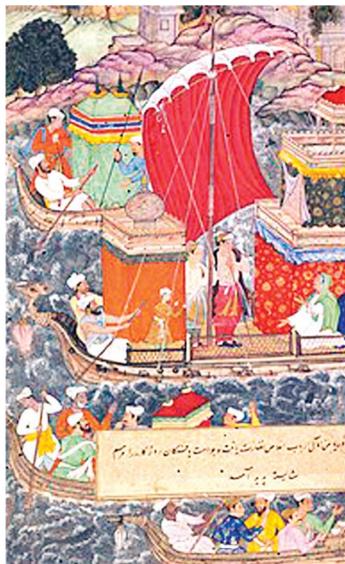
On 14 February 1556, Akbar was crowned as the new Mughal Emperor and his first deed was to appoint Bairam Khan as Vakil (Prime Minister) and grant him the

lofty titles of Khan-i-Khanan and sipahsalar itizad-i-daulat qahira (commander-in-chief of the army, mainstay of victorious dominion). Bairam entered Babur's service at the age of 16. He served three successive Mughal emperors, Babur, Humayun and Akbar, and being a gifted military general and strong leader of men, was a steady hand on the shoulder for each of these emperors.

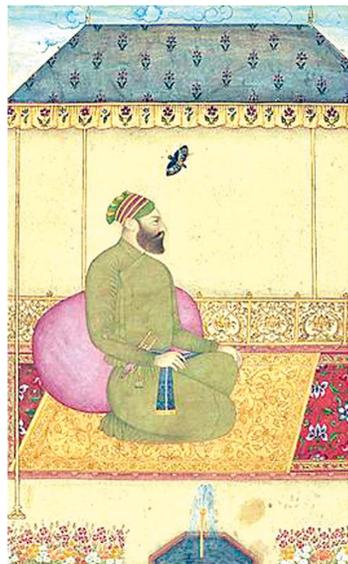
During the first four years of Akbar's rule, while he was still a teenager, Bairam was the real power behind the throne. He more or less co-founded the Mughal empire, removing obstacles and quelling dissent in Punjab and Sind including the decisive defeat of Hemu at the second battle of Panipat, which paved the way for Akbar's ascent.

Though Bairam Khan was instrumental in his young pupil's success, Akbar was a willful youth and friction soon grew between them. Early signs of Akbar's defiance happened within months of his accession, when at the pivotal battle of Panipat, a half-dead Hemu was captured and brought to Akbar in battle. Bairam had urged Akbar to prove his sword as this was his first war. But Akbar refused, saying, "He is now no better than a dead man, how can I strike him? If he had sense and strength, I would try my sword." The historian Badauni describes that Bairam then slew Hemu himself, sending his head to Kabul as a trophy and his torso to Delhi to be placed on a gibbet.

A gibbet is a 17th-19th century gallow-like structure to display the corpses of executed criminals. Particularly murderers, pirates, and thieves. Designed as a public deterrent, the bodies were often hung in cages at high profile locations like crossroads to rot. They were often tall, thirty feet wooden post with a projecting arm holding an iron cage or 'gibbet irons' designed to fit the body. By the age of eighteen, Akbar was impatient to stand on his own feet. Others around him, who were jealous of Bairam's authority, used this to drive a wedge between the two. A



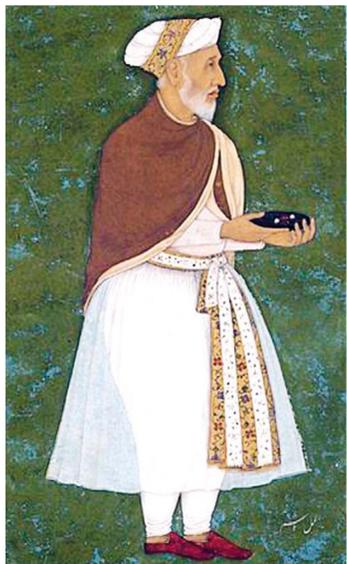
Akbar's mother travels by boat to Agra.



Portrait of Nawab Bairam Khan.



Bairam's widow and child are escorted to Ahmedabad, Akbarnama.



Abd al-Rahim, Khan Khanan.



Akbarnama.

#AKBAR AND BAIRAM KHAN

plot was hatched for Akbar to leave Agra for Delhi on the pretext of visiting his ailing mother, Hamida. Once Akbar reached Delhi, he wrote to all the top nobles that he had broken with Bairam Khan for

his deviating from the straight path' and Bairam was ordered to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca. On his part, Bairam responded with dignity, submitting to Akbar's will as he left Agra with his close relatives.

According to another account, in 1560, after Bairam Khan's influence became too great, Akbar relieved him of his duties and offered him a choice: retirement at court, a high provincial position, or a pilgrimage

to Mecca. Once Bairam reached Rajasthan, he unexpectedly spun around in revolt. The reason was the coterie around Akbar overplaying their hand. Trying to humiliate a proud person who was already

down, Maham Anga, Akbar's wet nurse, decided to send a general to escort Bairam out of the empire to make sure he left. She 'unwisely' chose Pir Mohammed, a man recently sacked by Bairam as a ser-

vant, being rather eloquently directed to 'draw in your feet under the blanket of disappointment, and sit in a corner.'

Bairam's revolt was short lived. When he was captured and

bought before the Mughal emperor, Akbar rose to the occasion treating his former guardian with the highest grace and respect. Abul Fazl writes that as Bairam approached the royal camp, "all

the emirs and khans went out, by the emperor's order, to meet him, and conducted him to the emperor with every mark and honor." Then, Akbar "with his sacred hand raised Bairam Khan's head from the ground of humiliation and embraced him. He took the cloth from his neck and wiped from his face the tears of penitence and the dust of shame. With his gracious lips, he enquired about his health and bade him sit on his right side, as had been the rule when Bairam Khan was prime minister."

Akbar offered Bairam three options: staying on in court as advisor, retiring to any fief of his choice in India, or going on pilgrimage to Mecca. Bairam chose the last. A few days after this meeting with Akbar, Bairam resumed his route to Mecca and reached Patan in Gujarat where he set up camp.

At Patan, Bairam visited the Sahastralinga Tank (which still exists), where he was recognized by a gang of Afghans loyal to Hemu, whom Bairam had defeated and killed at the Panipat battle. He was set upon by the Afghans and stabbed to death. Haji Khan planned his attack and killed Bairam Khan in order to take revenge for Emperor Hemu's death. Haji Khan Mewati was from Alwar and he had been a general of Hemu, and had been staying at Patan after his defeat by Akbar's forces and the capture of Alwar sarkar in 1559. There was no one to bury his body, which lay unattended "in the dust and in his blood...till some fakirs and poor men lifted up his bloody corpse and committed it to earth," writes Abul Fazl.

In the Akbarnama, Abul-Fazl documents the downfall and death of Bairam Khan, detailing his fall from favour as Akbar's regent, the subsequent rebellion, and his murder by an Afghan named Mubarak Khan in January 1561. The Akbarnama was commissioned by Akbar as the official chronicle of his reign. It was written in Persian by his court historian and biographer, Abul-Fazl between 1590 and 1596, and the V&A's partial copy of the manuscript is thought to have been illustrated between about 1592 and 1595. This is thought to be the earliest illustrated version of the text, and drew upon the expertise of some of the best royal artists of the time. Many of these are listed by Abul-Fazl in the third volume of the text, the *A'in-i Akbari*, and some of these names appear in the V&A illustrations, written in red ink beneath the pictures, showing that this was a royal copy made for Akbar himself. After his death, the manuscript remained in the library of his son Jahangir, from whom it was inherited by Shah Jahan.

Maham Anga, Akbar's foster mother, became the sole power holder in the Mughal court following her ousting of Bairam Khan. Akbar's tutor who was the de facto ruler during the early years of his reign, from the political scene. She had convinced Akbar that in Bairam Khan's presence, he would not be able to exercise authority. The power was then appropriated by Anga, who can be seen in artistic depictions of Akbar's court, conducting the affairs of the state sitting next to the emperor.

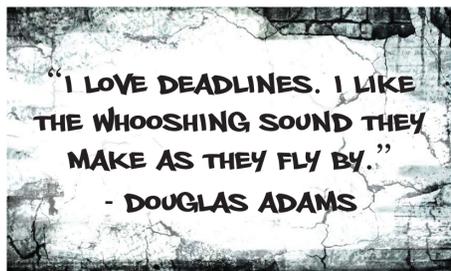
It was a sad end for a great man. But Akbar saw to it that Bairam Khan's lineage would continue. His family was rescued and brought to Akbar's court, where Akbar married Bairam's widow Salima Begum and took responsibility for Bairam's four-year-old son Abdur Rahim. In later years, Abdur Rahim would scale the same heights as his father, becoming the highest noble in Akbar's court as Abul-Rahim Khan-i-Khana.

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Akbar.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman