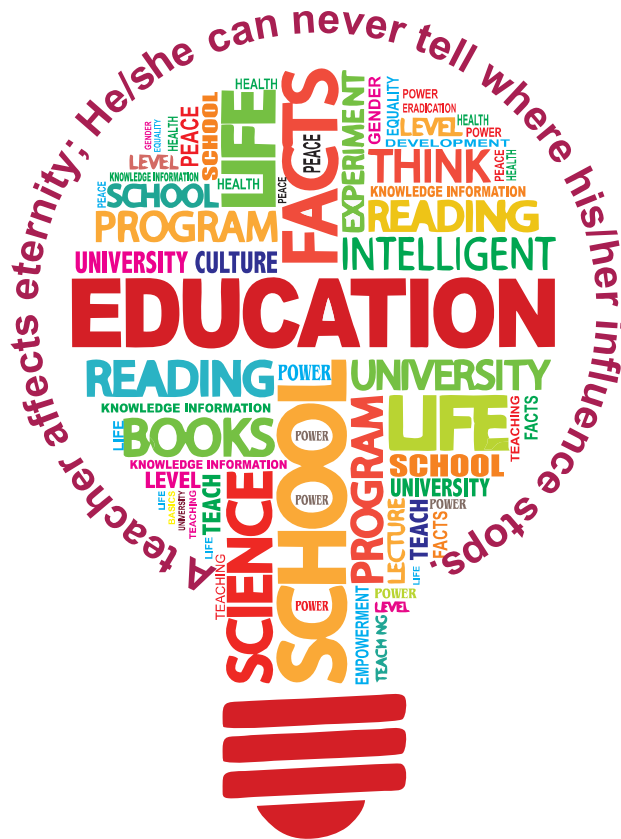




PRESENTS

EDUCATIONAL ALCHEMISTS

Transforming Bihar's Districts





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This inspirational book is a biographical narrative that reveals the unique thought process, grand vision, untiring efforts and enthralling anecdotes of top achievers in the field of private education in Bihar.

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PREFACE

Today, people from Bihar are the backbone of Indian administrative machinery. They have been doing exceptionally well in the corporate world as well as in different areas of scientific research, medical and engineering. Credit goes to those selfless souls who truly cared about serving the society and worked tirelessly to upgrade the lives of people around them.

Towards the end of the 20th century, certain people took it upon themselves to prepare the future generations of Bihar to meet the challenges of globalisation as well as to make the most of the opportunities it was supposed to bring to the country.

There was a new awakening. Bihar witnessed yet another phase of reform – introduction of English medium schools imparting modern education. Everyone who decided to make a contribution did it for self satisfaction... no matter whether they belonged to a princely state... or came from a family that has been producing top professionals for generations.

As we are approaching the end of the first quarter of the 21st century, we decided to look for those unsung heroes and document their efforts for posterity. We travelled the length-and-breadth of Bihar and came across several individuals who braved the challenges and continued the mission. We zeroed in on indigenously developed CBSE-affiliated schools and selected one top institution from each district.

This book, “Educational Alchemists: Transforming Bihar's Districts,” celebrates the legacy of twenty visionary educators who transformed socio-economic conditions in their neighbourhood through quality education.

As you flip through pages of the book, you will come across stories of several real life heroes including someone who was a UGC scholar with a PhD degree at an early age of 23 but decided to forego a lucrative career in research and academics to serve the society. The book also traces the cases of top corporate professionals who quit their jobs to give positive direction to hundreds of youth in small towns. While certain edupreneurs came forward and established quality schools offering modern education, several educationists also resigned from top institutions in big cities and returned home to serve children in their neighbourhood.

We present this book to you with great expectations that it will help shine a light on such a dynamic region of India, demonstrating that the challenges and opportunities confronting Bihar are unique and worthy of discussion by academics, businesses and governments.

—IMRAN MOJIB



FOREWORD

**“Education is not merely the imparting of knowledge;
it is the key to unlocking the vast potential within every individual!”**



Ashit Kukian
CEO, Radio City

As we delve into the pages of 'Educational Alchemists Transforming Bihar's Districts,' we embark on a journey through the educational landscape of Bihar, a state committed to the transformative power of learning.

Over the past decade, Bihar has witnessed a remarkable shift in its approach to education. The rise of private schools has played a pivotal role in shaping the educational narrative, offering not just classrooms but vibrant spaces where young minds can thrive and evolve. In this Coffee Table Book, we celebrate these institutions that have become beacons of quality education, providing a platform for holistic development.

Each school featured in these pages represents more than just an institution; it symbolises a commitment to nurturing young talents, fostering a globally-inclusive community, and providing endless extracurricular opportunities for character development. These educational alchemists are moulding the future of Bihar, one student at a time.

However, we must acknowledge the challenges that persist. Disparities in infrastructure, varying student-teacher ratios, and the quest for quality education create concerns for parents seeking the best for their children. This book serves not only as a tribute to the achievements of these schools but also as a guide for parents navigating the important decision of choosing the right educational path for their wards.

Our Radio City team has embarked on an initiative to showcase a visual and editorial journey through the rich history and legacy of these schools. This book is our effort to honour and showcase the dedication and passion of educators who play a pivotal role in shaping the future of Bihar.

May this compilation serve as a source of inspiration and information, igniting conversations that transcend words. Let us collectively strive towards a future where every child in Bihar has access to quality education, unlocking their limitless potential.

— **Ashit Kukian**
CEO, Radio City





Rubina Nishat

Reinventing Education For The Digital Age



The glorious journey of the historic A.R. Academy, Bihar Sharif, started in 1983. By 2001, times changed and so did the contours of the illustrious institution. And thus, rising like the phoenix, came up a new institution—Sadar Alam Memorial Secondary School, which continues to scale new heights in the world of academics with stellar performances by the teachers and students, who have attained great places in their respective fields

Nalanda was a great centre of learning and knowledge in the world. Scholars from different countries used to visit Nalanda to study religion and philosophy. Established in the 5th century AD in Bihar, the world's first residential university survived till 1197. The university went into oblivion only to appear again with its rediscovery in the 19th century.

However, the ruins of ancient Nalanda University continue to inspire many to reestablish the lost glory of the place. Former President of India APJ Abdul

Kalam had mooted the idea of reviving the ancient Nalanda University in 2006. But, there was a young visionary who had made a serious effort much earlier to revive love for learning in the residents of the neighbouring areas, in an attempt to regain the lost glory.

Md. Khalid Alam Bhutto, a young resident of Bihar Sharif—the administrative headquarters of Nalanda district of Bihar, always felt proud of being associated with this historic place but pained by the government apathy towards educational scenario in the district.



Md. Khalid Alam Bhutto



One fine morning in 1983, he decided to establish a school to prepare the future generations as global citizens and proud flag-bearers of Nalanda. After a brief discussion with family and friends, he started a school in a corner of his house with three students and three teachers and named it A.R. Academy in honour of his grandfather who was a renowned teacher.

Recalling, School Director Md. Khalid Alam Bhutto said that he was the founder, principal, teacher, mentor, promoter all in one. He used to visit door to door convincing parents to send their children to the school. Whenever a child bunked the school, he used to go home and bring the child on his bicycle.

Convinced by his dedicated efforts, soon people started sending their children to the academy. Every student was given individual attention which developed a close relationship between teachers and the students. This was good from an academic point of view as well.

Besides teaching the compulsory subjects, Khalid also added various activities useful for all-round development of the students and made them capable of living healthily and usefully. The list included various co-curricular activities including music, dance and drama, cultural fair, Science quiz, Math Olympiads, English language improvements through various activities including elocution contest, debates, extempore and drama.

First year of its existence was crucial. But Khalid and his associates' extraordinary efforts started to show good results. Soon, the A.R. Academy became the de-

facto choice of the local community in Bihar Sharif. The school maintained its stellar rise, added new classes every year, built new classrooms to accommodate increasing numbers of students, added new activities and appointed good teachers to keep improving academic performances. The students' exceptional results in Board examinations further boosted its image.

The Calamity

The school remained the first choice of everyone till 2001, when a calamity struck the school. Due to some technical issues, the Bihar Board cancelled registration of more than 300 students of the school who were supposed to appear for the board examinations. It came as a shock to the school management and to parents as well. This brought a bad name to the school. All those students were withdrawn with immediate effect, and with them went their brothers, sisters or relatives.

Khalid was left heart-broken. Years of his selfless services were thrown to the dust. The school was on the verge of closing down.

In this crucial stage, his newly-married wife Rubina Nishat came to the forefront. She decided to make a start from scratch and regain the lost glory.

To give the school a new identity the husband-wife duo decided to run the school on the pattern set by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), New Delhi, and adopted the name, Sadar Alam Memorial Secondary School, by which the high school was running.

Rubina Nishat, who took charge as Principal, said that changing the board pattern and adopting a new name of the school was not enough. "People were not ready to trust us again," she recalled.

In 2001, when they decided to adopt the CBSE-pattern, there were very few students in the senior classes. They focused on them. Gradually the number increased.

"The implementation of innovative ideas had made A.R. Academy the first choice of parents and we were convinced that only quality education and innovative methods of teaching will get us back to that position," said Rubina.

"As soon as we decided to shift to the CBSE-pattern, we started making the changes to meet the CBSE demand. I have studied in a CBSE school, thus I was aware of the benefits of a school that follows the CBSE curriculum," she added.

Recalling her association with the school, Rubina said that when she had joined the A.R. Academy, it was the best school in town. Every student used to score first division in the Board exams. Despite being connected to Bihar Board, it was in demand. The school used to refuse new admissions as it was running to full capacity. Even then, she had found abundant opportunities for improvements. She had felt the opportunity to enhance curricular and co-

computer labs, to help students better understand the concepts.

"The decision to change gave me the opportunity to put all my experiences to practice. Our dedicated efforts didn't go unnoticed. With the passage of time, the parents' anger also subsided. The increasing number of students and parents' trust gave us confidence. We decided to apply to the CBSE, New Delhi, for the school's affiliation," she said.

But every process was challenging. There was no Google or Godfather to guide them. They were not even aware that the CBSE had started receiving applications online, until they visited the board office to submit the application personally. Similarly, they were not even aware that a B.Ed degree was necessary to recruit teachers. They tried to bring teachers from outside Bihar, but it failed, no one was ready to stay here. Thus they hired teachers from the neighbouring areas and trained them.

Apart from the existing building, they acquired another plot of land spread over three acres for the new school building keeping in mind the CBSE norms.

"As it is said, doing is learning, we also learned the requirements necessary for CBSE affiliation. We fulfilled their criteria and applied again. Finally, we got affiliation up to Grade 10th in 2008 and the affiliation for Grade 12th came in 2011," she added.



MILESTONES

- 1983 : A.R. Academy, Bihar Sharif, started by Md. Khalid Alam Bhutto.
- 2001 : School adopted a new name, Sadar Alam Memorial Secondary School, Bihar Sharif and switched to CBSE.
- 2008 : The CBSE, New Delhi, granted affiliation till Grade 10th.
- 2011 : School's affiliation was upgraded up to +2 level by the CBSE, New Delhi.
- 2011 : Two students of the school got the President Awards. They went to Delhi, watched the Republic Day parade as well.

Today, in a small district like Nalanda there are more than 45 CBSE affiliated schools. Many of them are branded ones that focus more on infrastructure.

“An outsider may compare our school with the new ones in the city and find out that the infrastructure of our school is not so modern, which is quite obvious. But, we have been offering all the facilities necessary for contemporary education. We never compromised on imparting quality education. Consequently, we produce successful students, who have been carrying the flag across the world.”

She stressed, “Time has changed, people’s mentality has changed. But we have firm belief that schools should be compared on the basis of imparting quality education, not just for its infrastructure.”

Apart from the scheduled term exams, the school conducts Unit tests and periodic tests according to the students’ inclination towards higher studies medical, engineering, civil services competitions frequently – every month or every fortnight on the line of NEET/JEE tests and civil services examinations. They are suggested to keep them for posterity.

Challenges

Speaking about the challenges, Rubina said that she has been associated with the education system throughout her life, first as a student and later as teacher and administrator of a reputed school. Since she is also a keen observer, she has been noticing the changes educational institutions are going through.

She pointed out that there has been a sudden change in the attitude of students, parents and teachers. This is a recent phenomenon. It was not more than four-five years ago when parents used to send their wards to schools with the conviction that they will not just study from the textbooks but will also learn values

alien thing in schools. The age-old ‘guru-shishya parampara’ was still in practice in the schools, degrees may vary.

But today, parents have a completely different thought. Similarly, teachers have also changed. There are lesser connections between teachers and their students. Parents, in general, think that they are paying for the education of their wards thus teachers should focus only on curricular and co-curricular activities. Bereft of the respect that they used to have throughout their career, they have also changed to suit the changing market demand. Thus, in most of the schools, teaching has also become a regular job where they are responsible to fulfill their duties during the school hours. This is quite unfortunate, but that is the reality.

It’s a common phenomenon seen among parents going for a comparative over marks and grades with schools in state capitals and with those located in smaller towns. Even as the school imparts extensive and qualitative education, the lack of parental cooperation and their interest in the child's day-to-day academic schedule continues to be a speed breaker in most cases.

“Agreeably, where the new education policy adheres to the idea of not putting pressure on students, I am of the view that exertion for exemplary academic performance on students helps them to be seasoned at the grassroot level in order to carve a niche for themselves in the long run to success in life,” she said.

The pandemic caused by Covid-19 and the lockdown that followed also affected children, their studies as well as their behaviour. The pandemic left a lasting impact on education, with deficits in learning at all stages facing backlogs, delays and complex issues.

She said, “The pandemic caused historic disruption to school education across the world. Schools located in small towns like Bihar Sharif were the most affected. Reduction in family income, limited access to digital resources, and the high cost of internet connectivity disrupted the academic life of the students. To mitigate loss of learning, we prepared the notes, got it scanned and sent to parents with a note that if the child is not able to attend online classes, he/she should study these notes.”

Proud Alumni

In the past four decades, the school has produced several brilliant students who made the school proud by achieving great heights in their career. Several of them became notable doctors, engineers, civil servants, bankers, many others decided to carve a niche for themselves in the field of film and music.



Rubina said, “For us every student deserves the same love and affection, but to inspire new students I can name a few of our proud alumni including famous doctors Dr M. Hayat, Dr Gyan Prakash, Dr Ghuncha Alam, Dr Dhananjay Goswami, filmmaker Sarfaraz Alam, Ahmad Khurshid, lawmaker Deepak Kumar.”

There was a student, Ameet Kumar, who got admitted in this school in Nursery and studied here till Grade 12. He successfully cracked the JEE Advanced and secured a seat in the prestigious IIT. After acquiring a B.Tech degree from IIT, he prepared for another most difficult competition, the UPSC and got selected as an IAS officer. “We felt proud to receive him as he visited his alma mater after such stellar accomplishments,” she said.

In 2011, when she went for Hajj, a former student was working as an officer at Jeddah Airport. Noticing the school name mentioned in the address line of the baggage tag, he met Rubina and introduced himself as a proud alumni of her school.

Same year, 2011, two of the school's students got the President Awards. They went to Delhi, watched the Republic Day parade as well.

Social Service

In an attempt to fulfill his obligations towards the marginalised community of the society, Khalid started an evening school in 1997 to cater to the poor students. It continued till 2011. Children were taught for free by the same team of school teachers, whom he used to pay from his pocket. He used to give old books and stationery to the children as well. It gave good results. But with the RTE Act coming into force, it was discontinued and the students nominated by

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—Rubina Nishat

the government authorities were given admission in accordance with the 25 per cent reservation norms for the children of vulnerable sections.

“We follow the RTE norms strictly and maintain that 25 per cent students are from the marginalised communities. But the authorities should realise that just giving admission to a school is not enough. Because more than 60 per cent of those students do not follow school norms,” she said.

Elated by people's response, Director Md. Khalid Alam Bhutto decided to diversify the services. Thus he has set up various other educational institutions. He started two teachers training colleges including Vikramaditya College of Education and the V. S. Group of Colleges in Khedu Bigha, Ekangar Road, Nalanda. He has also started the Rowshan Ara Motor Driving Training School, which is one of the two state-authorised motor driving schools in Nalanda. There is one more affiliated school with the same name. The Sadar Alam Memorial Secondary School at Mohanpur, Nalanda, is running successfully.

“I strongly wish to set up a medical college in Nalanda to fulfil the requirements of the region,” concluded Khalid.

