

## Lesson 4

### Khona

#### A. Discuss the following:

1. What is Khona famous for?
2. What does it mean when someone uses the phrase "Khona's Words"?
3. Do you know of any other figures in history or folklore who have shared wisdom for the benefit of farmers, similar to Khona?

#### B. Read the following passage about Khona and answer the questions that follow:

#### Khona

*Jodi borshe magher shesh, dhonyi rajar punyi desh.*

If it rains at the end of Magh (last month of Winter), the kingdom will prosper.

The mystery that connects seasons with soil and crops with rain was no secret to her. She realized the interdependence that links people and climate in myriad ways. She was Khona.

The mythical story of Khona is deeply rooted in Bangla folklore. Khona, originally named Lila, was an incredible woman with a gift for predicting weather and understanding the ways of farming. Her wisdom was shared through memorable, rhyming verses known as "Khona's Words" or "Khonar Bochon." These sayings, though simple and easy to remember, were filled with deep knowledge and practical advice for farmers.

Khona used her knowledge to help the peasants, but her actions often challenged the ruling class. The rulers, not pleased with her defiance, punished her cruelly by cutting out her tongue. Thus, she became known as Khona, which means "someone who cannot speak." Despite this harsh punishment, her wisdom lived on through her sayings, which have been passed down for over 1500 years.

There are many versions of Khona's story. One retelling goes like this: in the kingdom of Deyulnagar, there was a royal astrologer named Varaha who served King Dharmaketu. Sadly, Varaha's wife died while giving birth to their son, Mihir.



Worried about his son's future, Varaha saw in the stars that Mihir was destined for a life of trouble and death. Heartbroken, Varaha decided to save Mihir by placing him in a copper pot and setting the pot afloat on the river Viddyadhory. The baby was found and rescued in Sri Lanka, where he was raised by the king. As he grew up in the royal court, he married the king's daughter, an astrologer herself, named Lila.

Lila and Mihir managed to find Varaha and prove that his predictions about Mihir's future had been wrong. Varaha, though surprised by his mistake, was thrilled to see his son again and welcomed both Mihir and Lila warmly. They were soon introduced to the royal court and became royal astrologers themselves.

Even though Lila was now a royal astrologer, she kept in touch with the local farmers. She learned a lot from them and found that they shared valuable knowledge through short, easy-to-remember verses. Lila began to use these simple verses to explain her own complex astrological knowledge.

Varaha, feeling jealous and angry, ordered his son to punish Lila by cutting out her tongue, hoping to silence her. However, Khona's story and her knowledge remained alive. Her wisdom about nature-oriented farming continued to benefit the people of the land.

**C. Write the meanings of the following words/phrases:**

- i. deeply rooted
- ii. interdependence
- iii. practical advice
- iv. challenged the ruling class
- v. silenced
- vi. shared wisdom
- vii. benefited the people
- viii. proved wrong

Now write five sentences with each of these phrases in your notebook.

**D. Answer the following questions:**

- i. Describe in your own words how Khona helped the farmers.
- ii. Why did the ruling class feel threatened by Khona's knowledge?
- iii. What qualities made Khona's wisdom endure, despite the punishment she received?
- iv. Why are Khona's words still relevant to our life today?
- v. What reasons can you find for Khona being considered a leader of peasants?

**E. Which of the following statements seem to be false and which true? Tick 'T' or 'F' after each statement to register your response.**

- i. Khona's predictions were only useful for the royal court. T/F
- ii. The ruling class punished Khona because her knowledge was helping the peasants. T/F
- iii. Khona's wisdom has been forgotten over time. T/F
- iv. Khona's verses were simple but filled with practical knowledge. T/F
- v. Varaha was proud of Khona's success. T/F

**F. Arrange a mini debate in pairs on the topic: "Is Khona's knowledge about the climate still relevant or irrelevant to farmers?" In each pair, one partner will argue that Khona's knowledge is still relevant to farming practices, while the other will argue that her knowledge is no longer relevant due to changed circumstances. Then 2 or 3 pairs will present their debate to the whole class.****G. Based on your reading above, write 7-8 sentences to introduce Khona to a friend who does not know about her.****H. Collect five sayings by Khona in Bangla and translate them in English in pairs. Once completed, exchange with another pair for review.**