



Tourism Grandeur of  
**BIHAR**



# History

**B**ihar is perhaps the most developing and populous state in India today. Yet centuries ago, this was where India's cultural renaissance began. The concept of organised society and structured education began here, and it was here that the genesis of a republic originated. For most travellers, Bihar is a place that should either be avoided, or crossed out of compulsion; however, 25 centuries ago, this was the capital of India's greatest empire builder. Emperor Ashoka ruled over his vast kingdom from Pataliputra, modern day Patna. Ashoka's tolerant view of other religions also ensured that Bihar became a major religious centre for Jains and Hindus, and thanks to the emperor's personal quest; it emerged as the crux of the Buddhist faith. It was at Bodhgaya that the Buddha sat under a Bodhi tree and attained enlightenment. A descendent of that original tree still flourishes, and Buddhist devotees still meditate under the boughs of that tree. Nalanda, which is not far from here, was a world famous university for the study of Buddhism, while Rajgir had strong associations with both the Buddha and the Jain apostle Mahavira.

Bihar is located in the eastern part of the country. This entirely land-locked state lies mid-way between West Bengal in the east and Uttar Pradesh in the west. It is bounded by Nepal to the north and by Jharkhand to the south. The lesser Himalayas that begin at the foothills of Nepal (to the north of Bihar) have a profound influence on the climate and hydrology of the state. Central parts of Bihar have some small minor elevations like the Rajgir hills, which are famous for their association with Buddhism and Jainism. To the south is the Chota Nagpur plateau, which was once a part of Bihar. Today it is a part of Jharkhand, which was carved out of Bihar

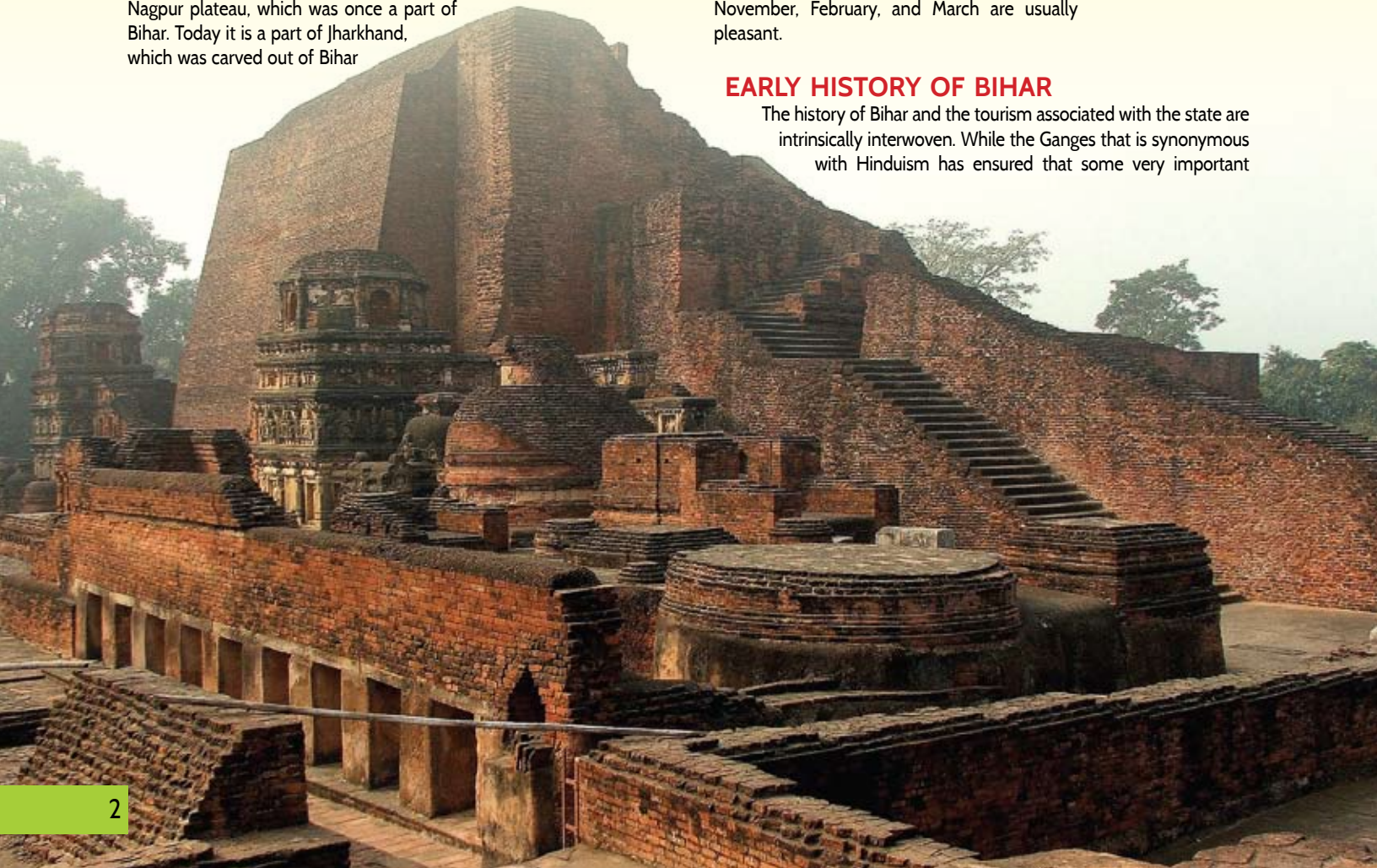
in 2000 on socio-cultural grounds.

The Bihar plain is divided into two unequal parts by the Ganges, which flows from west to east. Bihar is essentially a fertile plain nurtured by the Ganges and its tributaries. The Gangetic plain is vast and is one of the most populous zones in the country. Although this is one of the most fertile zones in the country, the annual flooding of the Ganges combined with the capriciousness of the river causes great misery. Every year hundreds of thousands of people are displaced and resettlement is a major issue. One of the main causes of poverty in Bihar is the patriarchal land divisions between families. Huge farmlands covering several acres gradually shrunk due to continuous divisions within the family, and today many farming families are forced to migrate to bigger cities as farming has become unsustainable.

Bihar has an extreme climate. Winters can get bitterly cold and summers annoyingly warm. The monsoon months of June, July, August, and September can be troublesome with heavy showers. October, November, February, and March are usually pleasant.

## EARLY HISTORY OF BIHAR

The history of Bihar and the tourism associated with the state are intrinsically interwoven. While the Ganges that is synonymous with Hinduism has ensured that some very important







places of Hindu pilgrimage are associated with the state, what stands out among its multicultural icons, (which include Sikh and Islamic places of worship), are the relics associated with Buddhism. To walk in the Buddha's footsteps is every pilgrim's dream and the Buddhist circuit in Bihar gives you an opportunity to visit sites associated with the Buddha. The trail commences in the capital city of Patna with a visit to the museum that houses a noteworthy collection of Hindu and Buddhist scriptures as well as a terracotta urn which is believed to contain the ashes of Lord Buddha. The Bodhgaya Temple in Gaya (approximately 100 km from Patna) marks the spot where the Buddha attained enlightenment while meditating under a Bodhi tree. Nalanda, which is 90 km south of Patna, is where a monastic university flourished from the 5th to the 11th century. Two thousand teachers imparted knowledge to over ten thousand students who came from all over the Buddhist world. Lord Buddha himself is believed to have taught here and the 7th century Chinese traveller and biographer Hieun Tsang was among its illustrious students. Rajgir, 12 km south of Patna was the venue for the first Buddhist Council. The Buddha spent five years at Rajgir after having attained enlightenment and many of the relics at Rajgir commemorate various incidents related to his life and times. The hill of Gridhrakuta is perhaps the most important, as this is where the Buddha delivered most of his sermons. Vaishali 40 km away, was where the second Buddhist Council was convened. It was here that the Buddha preached his last sermon. This town is also revered by the Jain community as it is believed that Lord Mahavira was born here.

Bihar Tourism is the force behind the development and growth of infrastructure and tourism in the state. It has taken major initiatives to showcase the potential of places of tourist interest within the state. More information on Bihar and its tourism body can be gathered at <http://www.bihartourism.gov.in>. For more details on Bihar, you can also contact Department of Tourism, Government of Bihar, 4th Floor, B.S.F.C Building, Frazer Road, Patna. You can also call them at +91 612-2332042 or write them an email at [dir-tourism-bih@nic.in](mailto:dir-tourism-bih@nic.in). Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation, Bir Chand Patel Path, Patna, Phone: +91-612-2225411, Email: [contact@bstdc.gov.in](mailto:contact@bstdc.gov.in), [bihardarshan2014@gmail.com](mailto:bihardarshan2014@gmail.com)

## PATNA

### Capital City

The modern city of Patna (Bihar's state capital) is perhaps the world's largest riverine city. Its recorded history goes back to 500 B.C. and its origins are closely related to the rise and fall of the Magadhan Empire. The core of the kingdom was the area south of the Ganges in Bihar. Its first capital was Rajagriha (modern Rajgir) then Pataliputra



(modern Patna). Magadha expanded to include most of Bihar and Bengal with the conquest of Licchavi and Anga respectively, followed by much of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Orissa.

Bihar further flourished under the Mauryan Dynasty. Chandragupta Maurya and his son Bindusara held sway over a vast empire, which stretched from Bengal to Afghanistan. The Ganges, then navigable throughout the year, was the principal river highway from Delhi to Bengal. From the river ports of Patliputra (Patna) and Champa, (near Bhagalpur) Mauryan vessels sailed as far as Sri Lanka and Java. Emperor Ashoka (Chandragupta's grandson) who ruled from 273 to 232 B.C. was one of India's most illustrious rulers. With his conquest of Kalinga, maritime trade along the Ganges reached its apogee.

Pataliputra has always been famous; both in recorded history, and prior to that in the realm of Hindu religious literature and fiction. It has always been a part of Hindu legend, and its sobriquet has often been attributed to its association with the Hindu goddess – Patan Devi. The Greek historian Megasthenes and the Chinese explorer Fa-Hien, have both included vivid accounts of the city in their travelogues. Most of the liturgical Hindu texts which include the Puranas and the great epics are said to carry references to the city. Almost every dynasty in north India, which included latter day kingdoms like the Moguls, Sikhs and Nawabs of Bengal fought for control over this area. Even before the British finally established their suzerainty over most princely states in North India, the decisive Battle of Buxar (1764) established the foothold of the East India Company here, which finally led to British hegemony over the Northern provinces. It was ruled during the Raj era by a series of Viceroys, and today some of the ostentatious public buildings in Patna still bear a testimony to imperialistic arrogance. However, like most cities of north India, the architecture here has been dictated by the whims of its many rulers, over the many centuries of its inhabitation. In 1912, Patna became the capital of the provinces of Orissa and Bihar when the Bengal Presidency was partitioned, and later in 1936, Bihar attained statehood and Patna was retained as its capital city.



# Tourism Galore

Most of us go on vacation to find respite from the stressful life in work. Others go on a getaway to bond with their loved ones during their free time. Whatever your purpose maybe for your vacation, you would surely love visiting Bihar in India. This is a perfect destination for people who want to witness the place where Buddha spent most of his time on Earth. It'd be best to get a Money Supermarket backpacker travel insurance when you go here so that you'll have peace of mind when you tour here.

Bihar offers an array of sightseeing options to travellers ranging from Patna which is a capital of the state to Bodhgaya where Buddha attained enlightenment.

Buddha lived and preached in Bihar and it was from Bihar that Buddhism spread out into the world. It is from this land of learning that people took great ideas and came to learn at universities like Nalanda, from treatises like the Arthashastra. It is this land of Viharas where Buddhist monks prayed and spread the message of Ahinsa and Love. This is a land full of pilgrimage places for not only Buddhists but also Jains, Sikhs and Hindus.



Patna, the capital city of Bihar, is known for its Buddhist remains and is also a sacred place for the Sikh Community, since many of the Sikh Gurus were born here. The Buddha also is said to have passed through Pataliputra during the last part of his life.

The major tourist attractions of Patna are Khuda Baksh Oriental Library, Patna Museum, Golgarh, the Patna Cemetery, Padri-Ki-Haveli (a church), Har Mandir, Agam Kuan and a host of other structures. Places that are close by include Nalanda, where one of the oldest universities of the world was established.

And the best way to explore this historical city is by hiring a taxi. A host of local travel companies can be contacted to rent private taxis. Tourists visiting Patna must visit local bazaars to buy traditional weaves like the locally-made sarees and Madhubani paintings. Travellers must try local delicacies like litti chokha, milk pedas and chaats.

Patna is famous mainly for the historical importance and is a holy place for both Buddhists and Sikhs. The people of Patna also combine the neighbouring places of Bhojpur, Mithila, Vujj and Anga. They primarily speak Hindi, Urdu, Bhojpuri, Maithali, Magadhi and English.

Patna is well connected by rail, road and air. The city has five major railway stations to which there are regular trains from major cities of India. There is also the Loknayak Jayaprakash Airport in the city that is well connected to other cities by international and domestic flights. Road transport is also available from many north Indian cities. The best season to visit the ancient and historical city of Patna is from the month of October to February. There are a number of hotels in Patna with all luxury.

Meanwhile, besides Patna, Gaya is also one of the best places to visit in Bihar, and an important pilgrim for Hindus. It is believed that a Hindu will attain salvation if his last rites are offered under the immortal banyan tree in the yard of Vishnupad temple.

Nalanda, one of the first universities anywhere in the world, was established in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Buddha is believed to have visited Nalanda a number of times as have many travellers like Hiuen Tsang. At its height, Nalanda was a flourishing residential university with over 10,000 students and 1500 teachers. The original site is being excavated and the digs have revealed the ruins of 11 monasteries and several temples Rajgir is located in a green valley surrounded by rocky hills.

The place is sacred to both Buddhists and Jains as the Buddha

delivered his earliest sermons here and the Lord Mahavira visited it often. The first Buddhist council or enclave was held here in the Saptarni Cave, which is also the main source of the Rajgir hot water springs. A cable car provides access to the hilltop "Peace Pagoda" temple which was built by the Japanese, making it an ideal sightseeing place in Bihar. Bodhgaya is where the Buddha attained enlightenment. This makes it one of the most important Buddhist pilgrimage sites in the world.





# Tourist Circuits

## Buddhist Circuit

**W**hat makes Bihar stand out in the crowd of tourist hotspots are the splendid Buddhist attractions that are scattered all over the state. Looking at the number of Buddhist destinations, it could easily be figured out that Bihar used to be the most important centre of Buddhism from the start. Even today, it is considered as the most important Buddhist pilgrimage centre in entire world. The magnificent Mahabodhi temple and the revered Bodhi tree attract Buddhist pilgrims from all parts of the world. It is here Lord Buddha attained enlightenment and gave start a new religion that will be followed by millions of people throughout the world.

Since there are number of destinations in Bihar that are important Buddhist places, one needs to have a good idea of how to cover all of them in a systematic way. Here are some of the important Buddhist sites in Bihar –

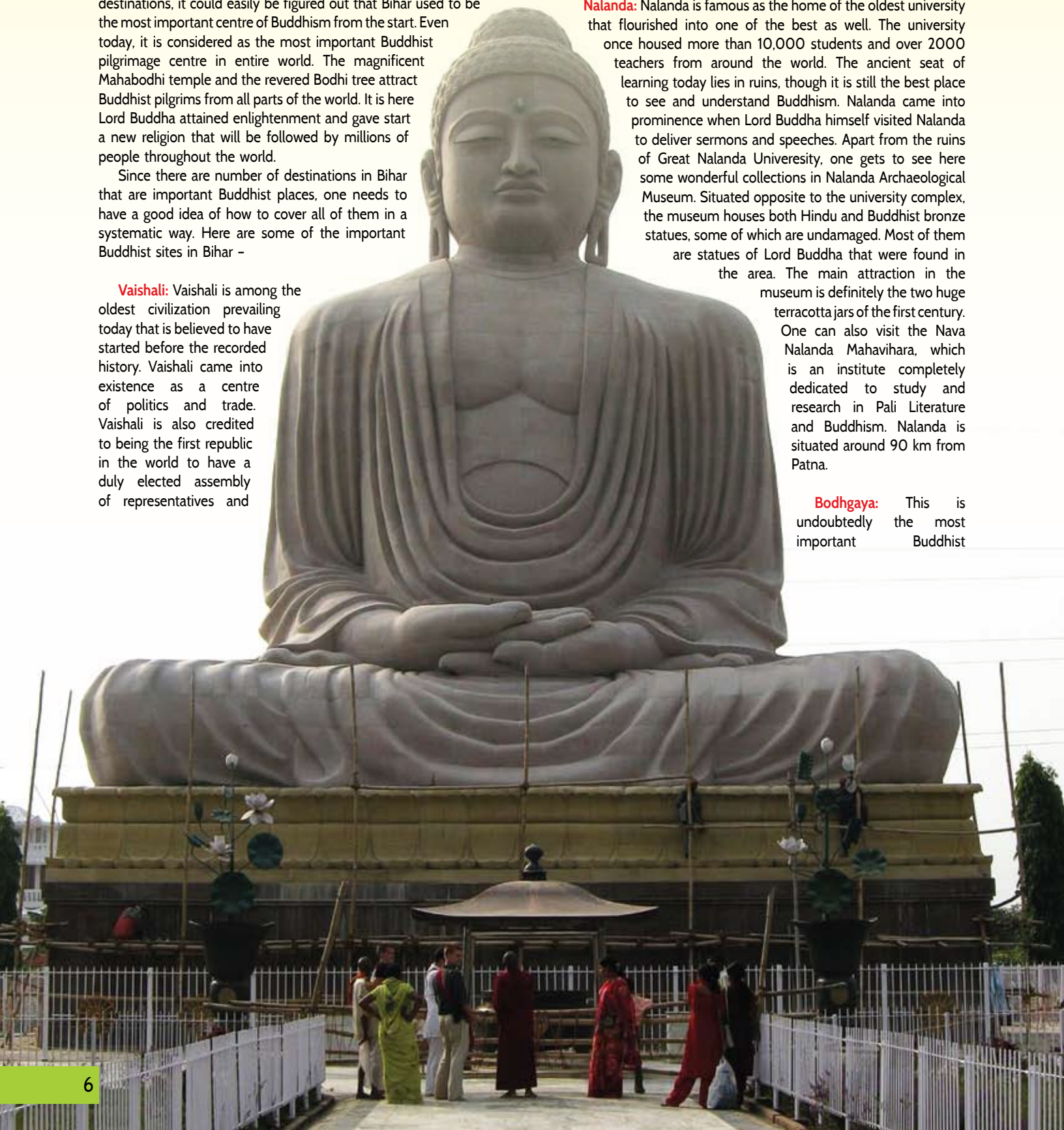
**Vaishali:** Vaishali is among the oldest civilization prevailing today that is believed to have started before the recorded history. Vaishali came into existence as a centre of politics and trade. Vaishali is also credited to being the first republic in the world to have a duly elected assembly of representatives and

administrations. Vaishali was made immortal with frequent visits of Lord Buddha who came here to give sermons and lectures. The main attractions of the city are Ashoka Pillar, Buddha Stupa, Fort of King Vishal, and Shanti Stupa. Patna is just 55 km from here and is well connected with number of buses.

**Nalanda:** Nalanda is famous as the home of the oldest university that flourished into one of the best as well. The university once housed more than 10,000 students and over 2000 teachers from around the world. The ancient seat of learning today lies in ruins, though it is still the best place to see and understand Buddhism. Nalanda came into prominence when Lord Buddha himself visited Nalanda to deliver sermons and speeches. Apart from the ruins of Great Nalanda University, one gets to see here some wonderful collections in Nalanda Archaeological Museum. Situated opposite to the university complex, the museum houses both Hindu and Buddhist bronze statues, some of which are undamaged. Most of them are statues of Lord Buddha that were found in the area. The main attraction in the museum is definitely the two huge terracotta jars of the first century.

One can also visit the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, which is an institute completely dedicated to study and research in Pali Literature and Buddhism. Nalanda is situated around 90 km from Patna.

**Bodhgaya:** This is undoubtedly the most important Buddhist





destination in India and probably in the world too. It is here that Prince Siddhartha attained enlightenment under a Bodhi Tree and became Lord Buddha and gave rise to a new religion called Buddhism. Thousands of pilgrims from around the world pay visit to the famous Mahabodhi Temple, Bodhi Tree and other revered places. Bodhgaya is scattered with numerous stupas carved with statues of Lord Buddha in different postures. There are many international monasteries and temples here that belong to different countries. The most beautiful and grand is the Thai Temple situated on the western side of Mahabodhi Temple. Bodhgaya is nearly 110 km from Patna and is well connected by road and rail transportation.

**Rajgir:** Situated just 10 km from Nalanda, Rajgir is a must visit destination for both Buddhists and Jains. While Lord Buddha used to give sermons here on the Griddhokut Hill, making it special for Buddhists; this is the birthplace of Lord Mahavira, making it even more important for all Jain Pilgrims. The main attractions of Rajgir are the Ajatashatru's Fort, Bimbisara's Jail, Swarna Bhandar, the Peace Pagoda and the Cyclopean wall. The peace pagoda is situated on top of the Griddhokut hill. A bridle path is there to take you to the top, but the best way to reach it is an aerial chairlift. It takes place every day except Thursdays. It takes around 15 to 25 minutes to complete the journey. The views over the Rajgir Hills will leave you mesmerised and spellbound, an experience not to be missed.

Without taking a Buddhist circuit, your trip to Bihar is as good as never started. Buddhist places and the brilliant atmosphere created by Buddhism have infused a new life to tourism in Bihar.

See a new chapter unfold in your life after visiting the many exquisite Buddhist destinations in Bihar.

**Kesaria:** This Stupa is in fact one of the many memorable stupa remarkable event in the life of Buddha. Kesaria has a lofty brick mound capped by a solid brick tower of considerable size, which itself is the remains of a Buddhist Stupa. The mound is a ruin with a diameter of 68 feet at its base and a total height of 5½ ft. originally it was crowned by a pinnacle which must have stood 80 or 90 ft

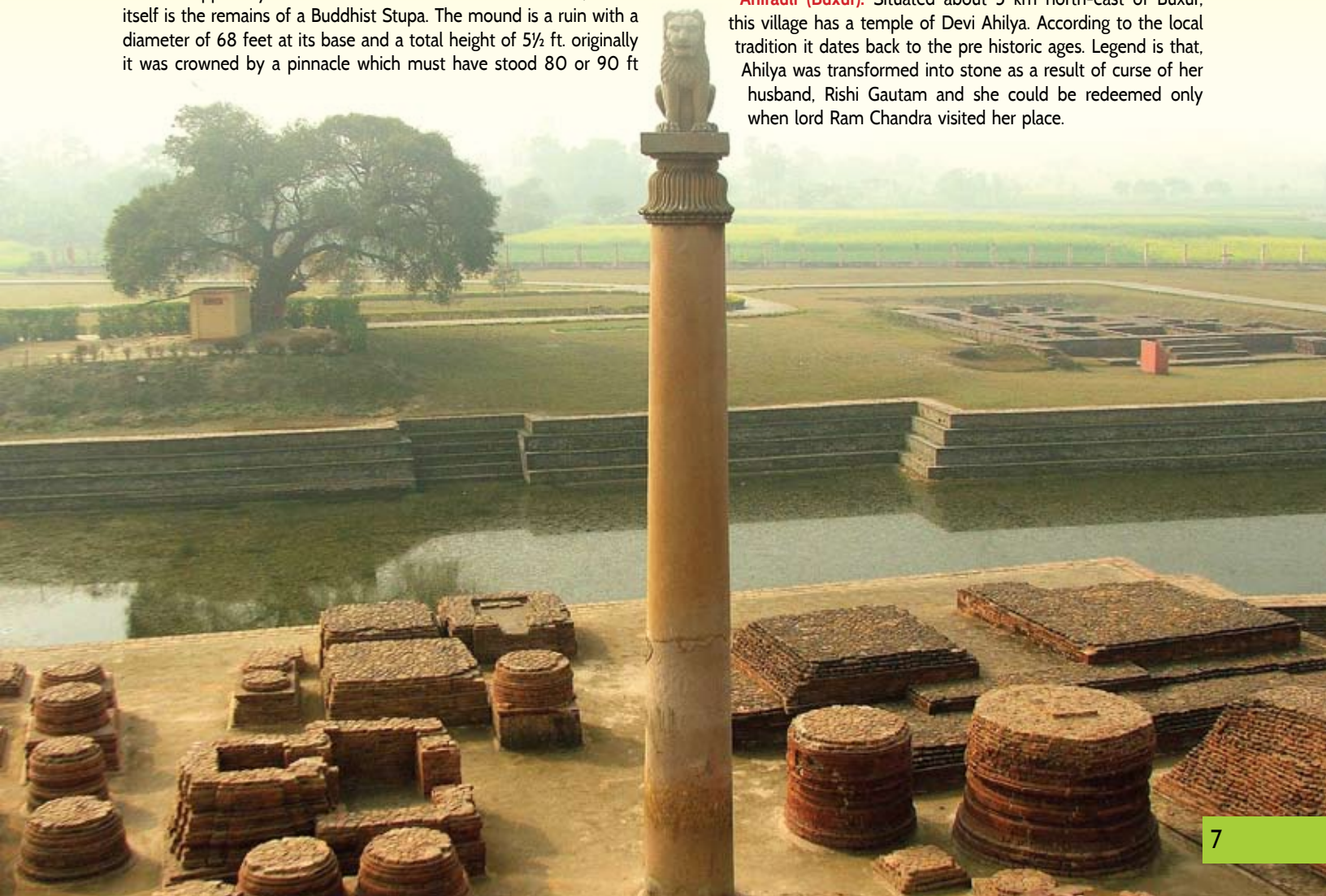
above the ground. General Cunningham dated this monument to AD 200 to 700, and held that it was built upon the ruins of a much older and larger stupa. Interestingly, Kesariya stupa is believed to have been built to honour the place where Lord Buddha had spent the last days of his journey, before attaining Nirvana. It is said that Lord Buddha handed over his begging bowl to the Lichhivis, people of Vaishali and requested them to go back to Vaishali, after his death. To venerate the end life of Lord Buddha, the Lichhivis are said to have built this stupa. While formerly, it was only a mud stupa, it gained its present structure in the Maurya, Sunga and Kushana period.

**Lauria Nandangarh:** Lauria Nandangarh is a rural community in the region of Champaran, Bihar. An attractive skeleton of enormous stupa are present at this juncture. It is a 26 metre elevated olden block funereal heap reflected to be the stupa where the ruins of Lord Buddha were preserved. At a distance of half km from the community, places the renowned pillar of King Ashoka. The pillar is an only slab of refined stone more than 32 feet (10 m) tall. The peak is bell formed with a round clone decorated by Brahmi birds sustaining the figure of a lion. The pillar is emblazoned by the decree of Ashoka in apparent and delightfully hack lettering. The lion was fragmented in the month plus the line bears the blot of time immediately under the peak which has itself been faintly uprooted.

## Ramayan Circuit

**Tar (Bhojpur):** Situated about 10 km North West of Piro the village derives its name from Tarka, a she demon killed by lord Rama. There is an old tank in the village that is said to be the wrestling ground of Tarka.

**Ahirauli (Buxur):** Situated about 5 km north-east of Buxur, this village has a temple of Devi Ahilya. According to the local tradition it dates back to the pre historic ages. Legend is that, Ahilya was transformed into stone as a result of curse of her husband, Rishi Gautam and she could be redeemed only when lord Ram Chandra visited her place.







**Ram Rekha Ghat (Buxur):** According to the legends, lord Ram Chandra and his younger brother Lakshman with their teacher Rishi Vishwamitra had crossed the Ganga here on their way to Janakpur where he later took part in the Sita swayambar (the public ceremony of Sita's Marriage).

**Pretshila Hills (Gaya):** About 8 km North-West of Gaya, the 873 feet high Pretshila Hills is situated. The literal meaning is the Hill of ghosts and it is sacred to yam, the Hindu god of hell and forms one of the sacred places of pilgrimage. On the top of the hill is a small temple, appropriately dedicated to Yam (The God of death).

**Giddheshwar (Jamui):** According to local legends, the epic fight between the vulture Jatayu and the demon Ravan took place here on the hill that is situated about 13 km south of Jamui, while the latter was abducting Sita. There is a temple of Lord Shiva, which draws big crowds on the occasion of Shivratri and Maghi Purnima.

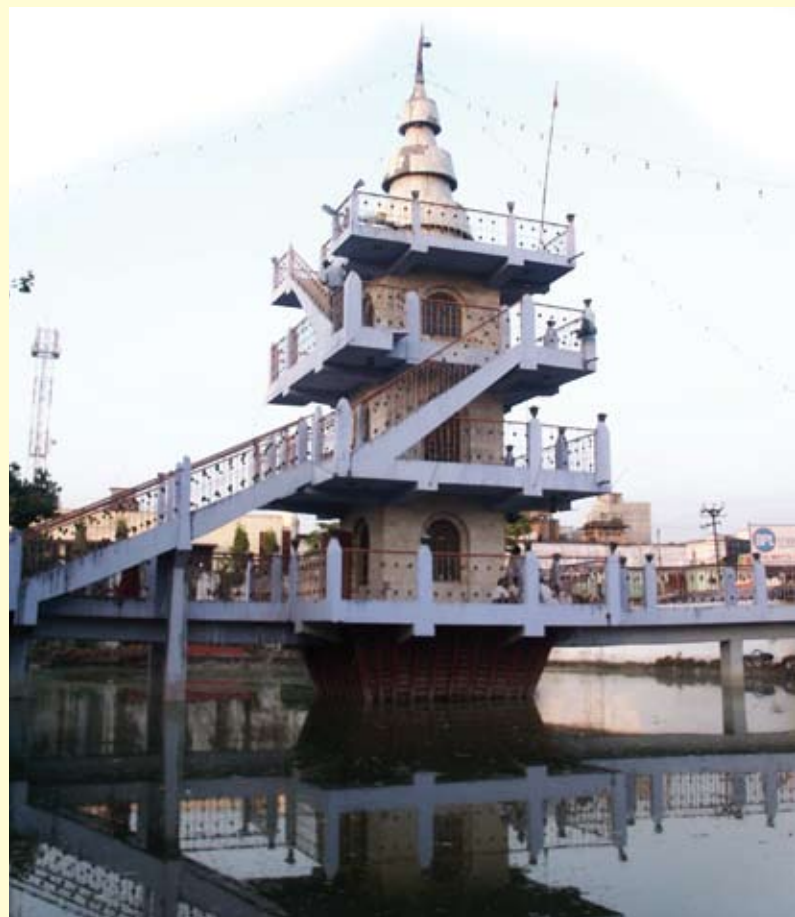
**Kako (Jehanabad):** Situated 10 km each of Jehanabad Railway station. According to the local legends, Lord Ramchandra's step mother, Rani Kekaik of Ayodhya lived here for some time and the village took its name after her. The village has also a tomb of Hazarat Bibi, Kamal Sahiba; a great Muslim lady saint. It is said that this lady was the aunt of Haryat Makdum Saheb of Bihar Sharif and Possessed divine powers.

**Singheshwar Asthan (Madhepura):** Singheshwar Sthan has been the abode of Lord Siva from the ancient times. Though there are various stories about the establishment of the Singheshwar temple, the one that is widely and popularly accepted, relates to Rishi Shringi. In ancient time Singheshwar was situated on the bank of the river Kosi and was surrounded by dense and lush green forest. It was ideally situated for 'Tapasya' (Meditation) and it is here that Vibhandak Rishi along with his son Rishi Shringi devoted all his time in deep meditation.

**Phullahar (Madhubani):** The village is situated about 6 km west

of the block headquarters at Umgaon under Harlakh P.S. The village houses temples of Goddess Girija. It is said that Sita, the daughter of king Janak, used to come here every day to worship the Goddess. Lord Rama saw her for the first time at this place.

**Sita Kund (Munger):** A village is about 6 Km East of the Munger town and contains a hot spring known as the Sita Kund spring, which is so called after the well known episode of Ramayan. Ram, after rescuing his wife Sita from the demon king Ravan, suspected that she could not have maintained her honour intact, and Sita, to prove her





chastity, agreed to enter a blazing fire. She came out of the fiery ordeal unscathed, and imparted to the pool in which she bathed, the heat she had absorbed from the fire. The hot spring is now enclosed in a masonry reservoir and is visited by large number of pilgrims, especially at the full moon of Magh.

**Ramchura (Vaishali):** The place is situated in Vaishali block, where a fair is held every year on Ram Nawami day. The local tradition has it that Lord Ram Chandra had a stopover here for a bath on his way to Janakpur. There are some marks on stone, which are said to be his footprints.

**Ahilya Asthan (Darbhanga):** The village is situated about 24 km North West of Darbhanga and about 4 km from Kamtaul Railway Station. It is known for the temple of Ahilya Asthan, which is associated with the well known legend of the sage Gautam and his wife Ahilya as told in the epics and Puranas. Inside the Shrine is a flat stone said to contain the foot prints of Sita, wife of Ram, as the main object of worship.

**Janki Temple (Sitamarhi):** This temple is traditionally considered to be the birth place of Sita or Janki, the daughter of King Janak. This temple, however, seems to have been built about 100 years ago.

**Janki Temple (Punaura):** This temple is about 5 km South West of Sitamarhi. It also stakes the same claim to be the birth place of Sita and is considered to be a sacred place where people go for a pilgrimage.

**Haleshwar Asthan (Sitamarhi):** This is an ancient temple of Lord Shiva about 3 km North-West of Sitamarhi. According to myths the King of Videha on the occasion of Putrayesthi Yojna, founded this temple.

**Panth Pakar (Sitamarhi):** An age old banyan tree still stands here about 8km North-East of Sitamarhi. It is said that when Sita left

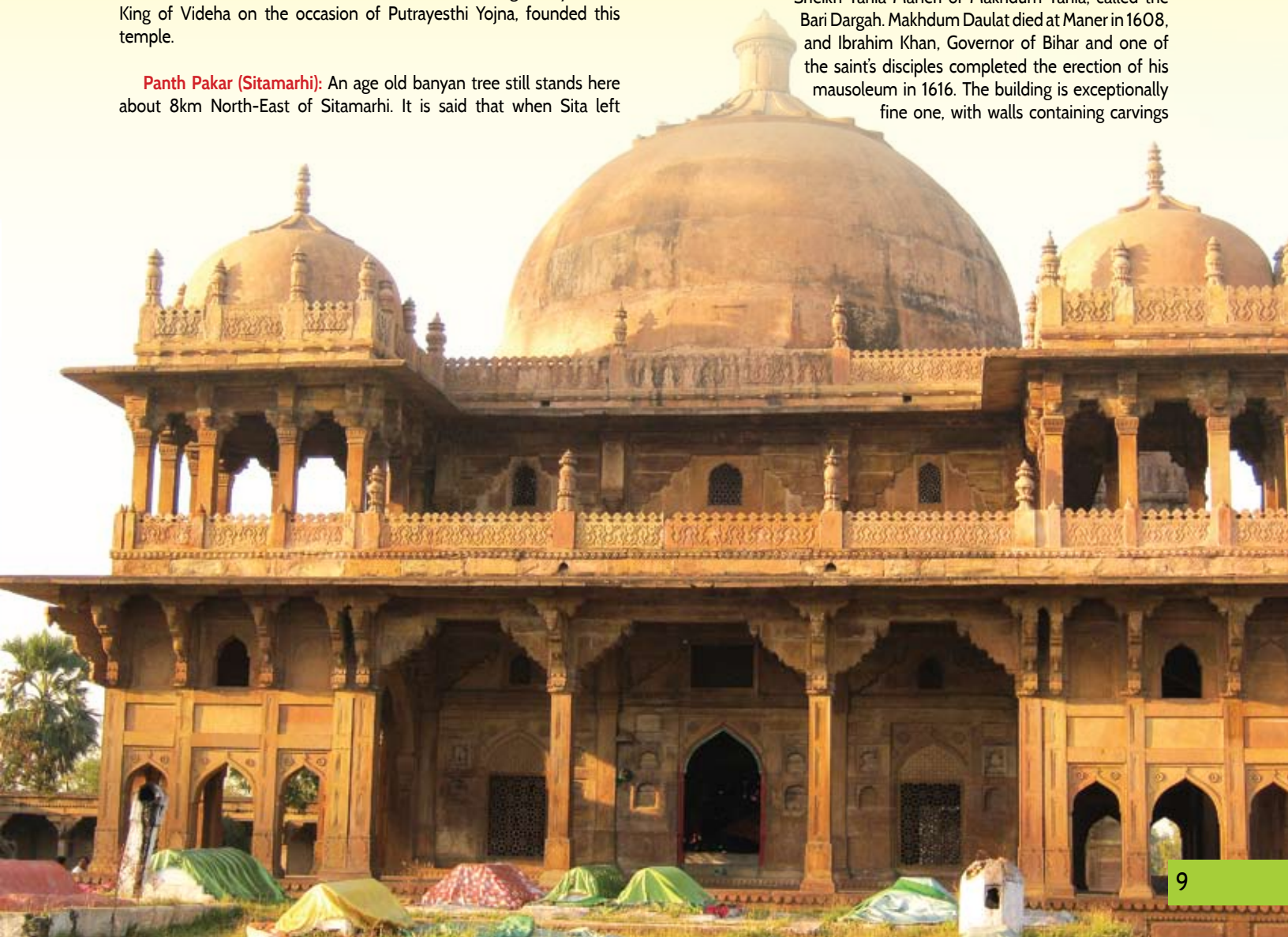
Janakpur in a palanquin for Ayodhya after the marriage to Shri Ram, she was given rest for a while under this very banyan tree.

**Chanki Garh (West Champaran):** Also known as Janaki Garh, this village is situated about 9 kms East of Ram Nagar Railway Station. There is a large mound in the eastern part of the village. It is a mass of solid brickwork and is 90' high. It was probably originally a Fort and the remains of fortification can still be seen. The local tradition asserts that it was a Fort of King Janak.

**Valmiki Nagar (West Champaran):** This is a village on the Indo Nepal border 42 km North-West of Bagaha to which it is connected by a metalled road. A barrage has been constructed here on the Gandak River for the purpose of irrigation. Besides an old Shiva temple constructed by the Bettiah Raj, there are also ancient temples of Nara Devi and Gauri Shankar at Valmiki Nagar. There is a Valmiki Ashram, which is said to be the place where Maharshi Valmiki was living. On the occasion of Makar Sankranti every year a fair is held on the bank of River Gandak.

## Sufi Circuit

**Maner Sharif (Patna, Maner):** It is a large village of historical antiquities, situated in the extreme north west of Danapur Sub-division, about 32 km west of Patna on Patna-Arrah Highway. In the early ages Maner was a centre of learning and it is said that grammarian Panini, and also Bhararuchi, lived and studied here. Maner contains two well-known Mohammedan tombs, that of Shah Daulat or Makhdum Daulat, known as Chhoti Dargah, and the other that of Sheikh Yahia Maneri or Makhdum Yahia, called the Bari Dargah. Makhdum Daulat died at Maner in 1608, and Ibrahim Khan, Governor of Bihar and one of the saint's disciples completed the erection of his mausoleum in 1616. The building is exceptionally fine one, with walls containing carvings





of great delicacy and high finish. A great dome crowns it, and the ceiling is covered with carved inscriptions from the Quran. Every detail of it is characteristic of the architecture of Jehangir's region, and it is by far the finest monument of the Mughals in Eastern India. Inside the compound there is a mosque also built by Ibrahim Khan in 1619, while a fine gateway bearing an older inscription corresponding to 1603-01, and affords access to the north. The tomb of Yahia Maneri lies in a mosque walls and ghats, and pillared porticos jutting out into it, which is connected with the old bed of the River Sone by a tunnel 400-ft long.

**Khankah Mujibia (Phulwari Sharif, Patna):** Nearly 7km from Patna Railway Station, Phulwari Sharif is an important Islamic pilgrimage. It has been always a favourite abode of Sufi saints in various times. Hazrat Pir Muzibullah Quadri was one of those in the 18th Century. The Khankah Muzibia, founded by him at Phulwari Sharif is called the Bari Khankah. An old Madarsa here has been the most important centre for teaching of Islamic philosophy since its establishment.

Sacred hairs of the beard of Paigamber Hazrat Muhammad Saheb are preserved here in Banri Khankah that attracts throngs of his followers and a big mela is held every year. There is also an archeologically important and worth seeing ancient Sangi Masjid (mosque) built of red stones at Phulwari Sharif. It was built by the Mughal Emperor Humayun.

**Khankah Emadia (Mangal Talab, Patna City, Patna):** One of the off-springs in the family of prominent Sufi Saint Hazrat Pir Muzibullah Quadri had founded another Khankah during 19th century near a tank called Mangal Talab that is situated in the Patna City Chowk area. It is called Khankah Emadia that houses a Madarsa. An Urs is held here annually when throngs of devotees assemble and pay their respect to their beloved Sufi Saint.

**Dargah Sharif, Mithan Ghat (Patna City, Patna):** A beautiful double storied mosque was built by Mughal Prince Azim on the banks of Ganges at Mittan Ghat, Patna City area that was previously called Azimabad during the reign of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. This mosque was built for Mulla Mittan who was teacher of the Prince. It was the place from where the great Sufi Saint Hazrat Makhdum Munnem used to preach his disciples during the 18th Century. The ancient mosque still exists and is popularly known as Dargah Sharif.

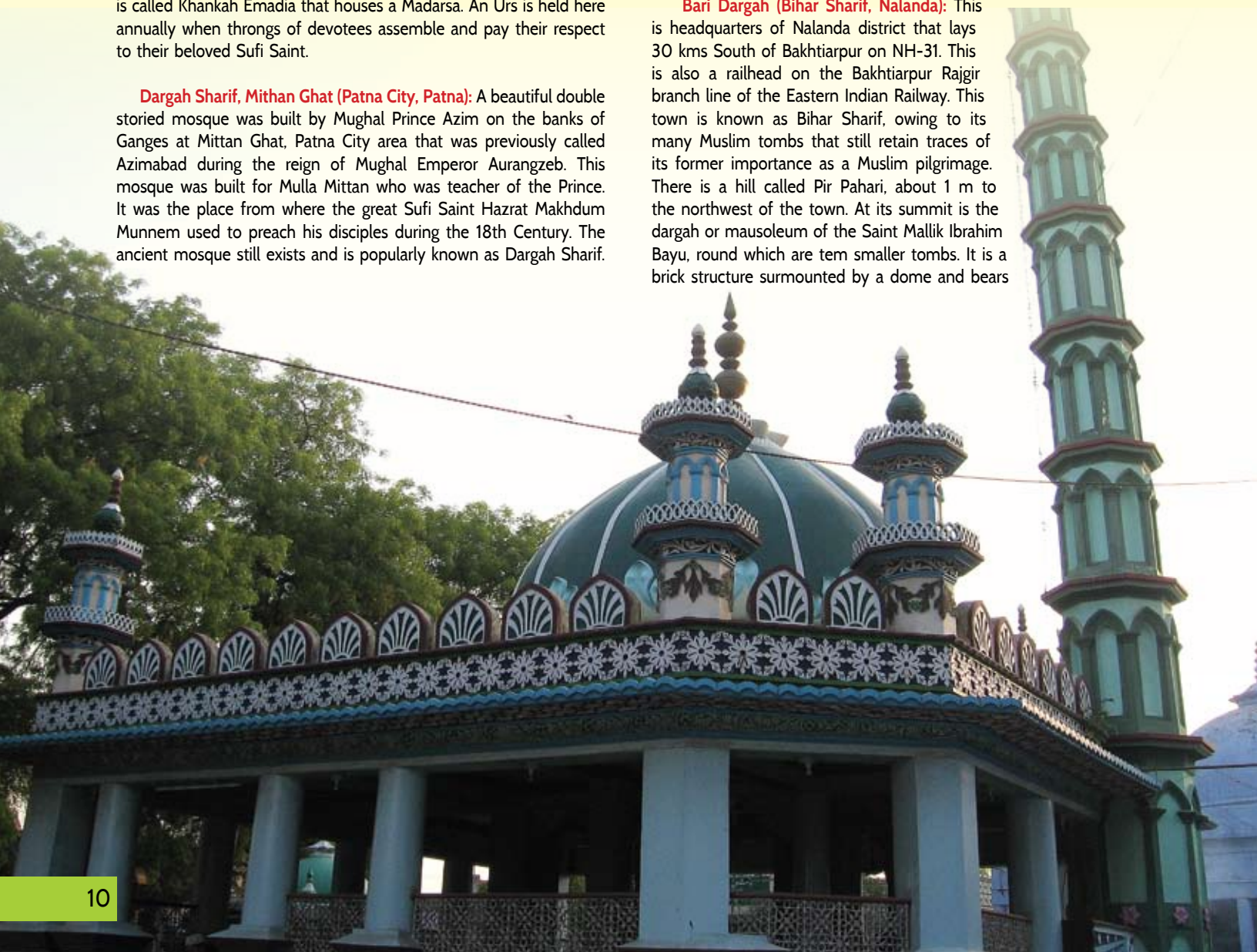
Every year, after 5 days of "Eid", an annual Urs Chiraga is held here when devotees assemble at this Dargah Sharif in great numbers.

**Hajipur Karbala (Vaishali):** It was constructed 175 years ago by Shah Alam. It attracts a large crowd of Muslims throughout the years.

**Hasanpura (Siwan):** The village is situated about 21 km South of Siwan on the bank of Dhanai River. According to tradition, Makhdum Saiyed Hasan Chisti, a saint who came from Arabia to India and settled here, founded this village. He also founded a Khankah (religious institution) here. The village contains remains of a large mosque and tomb of the Saint, which is visited by both Hindus and Muslims. The grave is a large open court to the west of the village. In front of it is a basalt image of Vishnu but it has been ruthlessly treated. It is regarded as an inauspicious fiend who has turned into stone by the holy Makdum and must not be raised or placed erect. It contains no inscription but its style shows it to belong to about the seventh century A.D.

**Bibi Kamaal Sahiba (Kako, Jehanabad):** The village is the headquarters of the block of the same name and is situated on the Jehanabad-Bihar Sharif road, about 10 kms East of Jehanabad railway station. According to a local legend, Ram Chandra's stepmother, Rani Kaikeyi of Ayodhya lived here for some time and the village took its name after her. The village took its name after her. The village has also a tomb of Hazrat Bibi Kamaal Sahiba, a great Muslim lady saint. It is said that this lady was the aunt of Hazrat Makhdum Saheb of Bihar Sharif and possessed divine powers.

**Bari Dargah (Bihar Sharif, Nalanda):** This is headquarters of Nalanda district that lays 30 kms South of Bakhtiarpur on NH-31. This is also a railhead on the Bakhtiarpur Rajgir branch line of the Eastern Indian Railway. This town is known as Bihar Sharif, owing to its many Muslim tombs that still retain traces of its former importance as a Muslim pilgrimage. There is a hill called Pir Pahari, about 1 m to the northwest of the town. At its summit is the dargah or mausoleum of the Saint Mallik Ibrahim Bayu, round which are ten smaller tombs. It is a brick structure surmounted by a dome and bears





inscriptions showing that the saint died in 1353. Another great dargah is that of Mokhdum Shah Sharif ud-din, also called Makhdum-ul-Mulk, died here in 1379; the inscription over the entrance shows that his tomb was built in 1569. This tomb, which stands on the south bank of the river, is held in great veneration by the local Mohammedans, who assemble here on the 5th day of Sawan to celebrate the anniversary of his death. The Chhoti Dargah is the shrine of Badruddin Badr-I-Alam, famous saint who died here in 1440.

**Chhoti Dargah (Bihar Sharif, Nalanda):** Dargah of Makhdum Hazrat Sultan Ahmed Charampose, Bihar Sharif (Nalanda).

The biggest and the oldest building of Mohalla-Amber in the Bihar Sharif Town (Nalanda), is Tomb of Hazarat Makhdum Sultan Saiyad Shah Ahmed Charampose Teg Barhana Rohmatulla Alaib. He was born in the year 1236 and passed away in 1335 (according to Islamic calendar 657-776 Hizri). He is ranked to a very high order among other Sufi saints and Auliahs.

Thousands and thousands of people participate in the 'Urs' celebrated here in memory of the Saint every year.

## Gandhi Circuit

**Motihari (East Champaran):** Motihari was to the first laboratory of Gandhian experiment in Satyagraha and probably it will not be very incorrect to say that it has been the spring board for India's independence. Champaran district generated a wave of enthusiasm and inspiration to the people who were thirsting for a selfless and saintly leader. The technique followed by Gandhiji in Champaran was what attained later on the name of Satyagraha.

**Hazarimal Dharamshala, Betia (West Champaran):** It is at Betiah in the Lal Bazar area. Gandhi and his companions used to camp here and it was the epicenter of his "Satyagraha". The State Govt. has declared this building a protected monument. The Betia Raj Kuteherry and the Dharmashala were Mahatma Gandhi stayed are well worth visit.

**Bhitharwa Ashram (West Champaran):** It is a village in the Bettiah Sub-division under Gaunaha Block. This was one of the centre for social work selected by Gandhiji, when he was in Champaran in 1917. At present there is a Khadi Centre working under direct control of the Bihar Khadi Samiti. There is a Gandhi Ashram where Mahatma Gandhi had stayed during the Indian freedom struggle.

**Brindaba (West Champaran):** It is a small village in the Betia sub-division under Champatia Block. It has the Gram Seva Kendra, which had been planned to work out the deals of the Gandhi Seva Sangh. The all India Gandhi Seva Sangh held their annual conference at this village in 1937. Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Rajendra Prasad attended it. Gandhiji stayed here in 1939 and started an Ashram, which is still functioning.

**Shri Rampur (West Champaran):** Situated in the Gannaha Block of Bhitharwa Panchayat. Gandhiji had stayed here on 16th November, 1917.

**Koeldih (West Champaran):** Under Gaunaha Block in the Belwa Panchayat. Gandhiji had visited this place on 16th November, 1917.

**Amolwa (West Champaran):** Under Gaunaha Block in the Majharia Panchayat, where Gandhiji spent a night on the 27th April, 1917 with







his other companions.

**Murli Bharhawa (West Champaran):** It was the native place of Pandit Raj Kumar Shukla who had been a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi during the Champaran Satyagrah Movement. Pandit Shukla took a lead role in bringing Mahatma Gandhi to Champaran.

**Sariswa (West Champaran):** This place is in Ratanmala Panchayat under Majhulia Block-Gandhiji and his companions had taken statement of raiyats in an open yard in front of the temple.

**Hardiya Kothi (West Champaran):** It is under Bishunpur Panchyat of the Nautan Block. It was house of Mr. G. P. Edward, a British Indigo Planter. Remains of this building are in a slightly better condition in comparison to other such old buildings.

**Sadaquat Ashram (Patna):** It is situated in Digha area on Patna Danapur Road and in pre independence days guided the freedom movement in Bihar. It is Associated with the memories of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Mautana Mazharul Haque and other leaders.

**Gandhi Sangrahalay (Patna Museum):** Close to the Western end of Gandhi Maidan in Patna. The Gandhi Sangrahalaya houses a large number of items and artifacts related with Mahatma Gandhi and his satyagrah movement in Bihar. It also has a vast collection of Gandhian literature and photographs depicting his life and works. A "Charkha" (Country made spinning wheel) used by Mahatma Gandhi is also well preserved in this museum.

## Eco Circuit

**Kakolat (Nawada):** It is a waterfall in Gobindpur police-station, about 21 miles away from Nawada. After going 9¼ miles from Nawada on Ranchi Road, a pucca road known as Gobindpur-Akbarpore Road diverts from there. Just below the fall there is a deep reservoir natural in character. The fall is about 150 to 160 feet, from the ground level. The scene is panoramic due to all-round green forest area, which is very pleasant to the eyes.

A legend is prevalent that in Treta Yuga a king named was cursed by a rishi and had to take the shape of a python and lived here. The place was visited by the great Pandavas during their exile and the accursed king got salvation from the damnation. The king after getting rid of the curse proclaimed that one who would bathe in the waterfall will not take the yoni of snake and that is why a large number of people from far and near bathe in the river. A big fair is held on the occasion of bishua or Chait Shankranti.

**Bhimbandh (Munger):** It is situated at a distance of 56 km from Munger, 20 km from Jamui Railway Station and 200 km from Patna Airport. Bhimbandh Wild Life Sanctuary is located in the south west

of Munger District. The forests cover an area or 681.99 sq km on the hills and undulating tract of Kharagpur Hills.

This forest are located in the famous Kharagpur hill range, south of river Ganga and is surrounded on all sides by non-forestry areas inhabited by dense population. The vegetation of these forests is very rich where Sal, Kend, Semal and other trees grow side by side the hilly terrain, protecting from the sun's rays the forms and humble creepers which grow below.

A host of animals such as Tiger, Leopards, Sloth Bear, Nilgai, Sambhar, Barking deer, Wild Bear, four horned Antelope use to abide by in these forests. In the valley portions and at the foothills are several hot springs of which the finest are at Bhimbandh, Sita Kund and Rishi Kund. All the hot springs maintain nearly same temperature round the year, and seasonal fluctuation of discharge is also nominal. Among them the Bhimbandh group of springs have the maximum temperature (52° C to 65° C) and discharge (0.84-1.12 cum/sec) and constitute the best area for the exploration of geothermal energy potential.

**Ghoda Katora:** Ghoda Katora is being developed as an eco-tourism site, which will have a huge Buddha statue. The statue will be flanked by his four important disciples: Venerable Ananda, Maha Kassapa, Maha Moggallana, and Sariputta. Many details like the statue height, posture of the Buddha, composition and materials (stone, metal, etc) are being discussed. The idea is to pay tribute to the Buddha and his disciples who are part of the cultural legacy of Bihar. The Buddha spent a considerable part of his life here at Rajgriha and around. Ven. Sariputta, Ven. Maha Moggallana and Ven. Maha Kassapa belong to Magadha, and their contributions to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha are well documented.

**Valmiki Nagar Tiger Reserve:** Spread across 880 sq km (approx), the Valmiki Wildlife Sanctuary is the safe home for the tigers, one of the threatened species of the world. Located at the cradle of Himalayan outermost ranges Shivalik range, the region has a very undulating landscape comprising of steep rise and deep ridges with the lush green forest around. The leopards and tigers along with the fishing cats, chitals, sambar, black bucks, langur, sloth bears, gaurs make the jungle an adventuring destination. The deep wood of Sal, Asan, Karama, Semal, Cane etc. is a pleasant getaway that offers a breathing space to the soul.

### Barabar Caves

The architectural beauty of Barabar Caves situated in the Barabar Hills is magnificent. These caves are located at a distance of around 25 km from Gaya. Barabar caves were carved during the first phase of development of Buddhism in the second century BC. These rock cut caves are deep and finely cut and have fine glassy and shining polish inside. Buddhist literature reveals that these caves were meant for Ajivika Buddhists. Barabar caves are divided in three types and one of them is Nagarjuna caves. Other two are Hut caves and caves of Pandavas. Nagarjuna caves situated on Nagarjuna hill are two in number; Sudama and Chaupar. According to historical evidence,



Nagarjuna hill caves were built during the era of Ashoka's grandson. Other cave called Lomas Rishi cave is magnificently carved and has a rectangular chamber and polished in bright shining color. These caves were meant for ascetic spiritual Buddhist monks who were truth seekers and wanted isolation and seclusion.

## Jain Circuit

### Patna

**Kamaldah:** In the area called Kamaldah (Gulzarbagh, Patna) is a high mound of brick ruins on which two Jain temples stand. There is mausoleum of Jain saint Sthoolhbhadra and the temple of Sudarshan Swami.

### Muzaffarpur

**Kund Gram:** As per Jain tradition Lord Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankar, was born at Kundagrama and Vaniyagrama was his residence. Both the places were either part of or near to Vaishali. The modern village of Bania can be taken as representing the site of ancient Vaniyagrama. The location of Kundagrama is identified with the modern village of Vasokund, about 2 km northeast of the gadh mound.

### Nalanda

**Kundalpur:** A beautiful Jaisalmer stone temple is situated close to the ruins of ancient Nalanda University at Kundalpur. This houses statues of Lord Mahavira, Adinath Swami and Gautam Gandharva. This place is believed to be the birthplace of Gautam Gandharva,

the first disciple of Lord Mahavira. An ancient Jain temple could also be here.

**Jalmandir:** Pawapuri, which is also known as Apapapuri, the sinless town, is a very sacred Jain pilgrimage. As per Jain Mythology and belief, Lord Mahavira, the greatest propounder of Jainism, attained Nirvana at Pawapuri. Hundreds of thousands of his disciples and devotees took away the ashes after his cremation here. The rush was so great that even the soils of the area were taken away and it became a tank. Later on, a beautiful temple of white marble was constructed in the center of the tank to commemorate the Lord's Nirvana. This temple is known as the Jalmandir.

**Samosaran:** This beautiful temple honors the place where Lord Mahavira sat to teach his disciples. The temple is constructed of white marble, rising by low steps into several concentric terraces with a beehive shaped shrine on the top containing the footprints of Lord Mahavira.

**Maniyar Math:** This monument occupies a prominent position inside the valley, situated on the way to the Son Bhandar Caves, almost in the center of the ancient inner city enclosure. Legend is that Srenika or Bimbisara had 32 wives to each of which he daily gave new ornaments, and threw the old ones into a well, which is still shown. This covers a modern small Jain temple as well.

**Sone Bhandar:** There are two rock-cut caves, adjacent to each other, excavated on the southern face of the Vaibhara hill, facing the western portion of the valley. Of them the western one is locally called as Son-Bhandar (Gold Treasury). As per Local belief, the piece





of rock within this space is an ancient wedge blocking up the passage to the treasury of gold in the body of the hill. It consists of a rock-cut chamber and its front part has been fallen. Inside the southern wall of the cave there are six small figures of Jaina Tirthankaras carved in relief and representing Padmaprabha, Parshvanatha and Mahavira.

### Nawada

**Gonava Jee:** Gonava village is situated at around one kilometer north of Nawada on Patna-Ranchi road. This is a pilgrimage site for the Jains of both sects. The Digambar Jain temple is just by the side of main road while the Shwetambar Jain temple is behind it. The temple is famous and known as place of Nirvana of Lord Mahavira's first disciple, Gautam Gandharva.

### Bhojpur

**Bisram:** This place is in town called "Arrah" where there are another 45 Jain temples. Lord Mahavira, the 24th Jain Tirthankara, took rest here for some time during his wanderings; hence this place is called Bisram (rest). Jains from every part of the country visit Bisram throughout the year. There is a Jain temple here containing an idol of Lord Mahavira.

**Masadh:** This village is located at around 9 km southwest of "Arrah" town. An ancient Jain temple dedicated to Parshwanath is situated here and contains eight images, some of them dates back to ancient time. The temple was completed in the year 1819 A.D. while some of the eight images date back to 1386 A.D. as per archaeological records.

### Banka

**Mandar Hill:** It is about around 48 km south of the Bhagalpur town. The hill is about 700-ft high that consists of a huge mass of granite overgrown near the summit with low jungle. This hill is believed to be extremely sacred as per the Hindu mythology. The Skand Purana associates Mandar or Sumeru with the famous epic or Puranic story of the Amrita-Manthana or the churning of the ocean. The story goes that the Gods and the Demons (Devas and Asuras) with a view to secure amrita (the divine liquor), which is believed to confer immortality, used this Mandara or Sumeru Mountain as the churning stick or rod. The great mythical serpent, Vasuki, was used as the rope. Due to this mythical association, the hill had assumed considerable religious significance and had been a place of pilgrimage ever since. Two Jain temples are situated on the summit of the hill. Large number of Jain pilgrims comes here to worship Lord Vasupujyanatha.

### Bhagalpur

**Champanagar:** A western suburb of the Bhagalpur town is at present known as Champanagar. In the Kalpa-Sutra this is mentioned as one of the places where the last Tirthankara Mahavira stayed for three rainy seasons in the course of his religious wanderings. According to the prevalent Jain tradition it is believed that Jain Tirthankara Vasupujya was born at Champanagar or Champapuri. There are two Jain temples of considerable size, both entirely built at the expense of the family of Jagat Seth, a supporter. At the nearby hamlet of Kabirpur there is another Jain temple with the footprints or padukas (footwear) of the 24 Jain Tirthankaras with an inscription dated V.S. 1694 or 1637 A.D.

### Jamui

**Lachhaur:** This is one of Jain pilgrimage sites, situated about 8 km west of Simaria and 7 km south of Sikandra. It has a large number of Jain temples and dharmshala built in 1874 by Rai Dhanpat Singh Bahadur of Murshidabad, for the benefit of Jain pilgrims, who visit some places in the adjacent hills. The nearest are about 5-kms of Lachhaur and are marked Muth Boodhroop and Muth Purusnath. These are two small shrines picturesquely situated in the valley between two

parallel ranges of hills. In each of these shrines one can find a small statue of Mahavira, one of them dates back to Sambat 1505, and the other appears to be the older one. The temples themselves, however, are of recent date. Some Jains hold Lachhaur to be the birthplace of Mahavir Swami.

**Kundghat:** It is around 6 km from Lachhaur. There is a temple of Kundeshwari Devi, which is considered sacred by the Jains.

## Sikh Circuit

**B**ihar is intimately associated with Sikhism. The 10th Guru of Sikh religion who was the pioneer in formalization and unification of the followers of G8uru Nanak was Guru Gobind Singh. He was the son of the 9th Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur and was born in Patna on December 22, 1666. At his birthplace there is a marvelous Gurdwara called Takht Sri Harmandir Ji. There are other Gurudwaras which commemorate some events of Guru Gobind Ji life. These gurdwaras are not only sacred pilgrimages for the Sikhs but wonderful to be visited by any travelers.

### Places associated with Sikh Circuit:

**Takht Sri Harimandir Ji:** Takht Sri Harimandir Ji is the birth place of Guru Govind Singh, the 10<sup>th</sup> Guru which is revered as one of the five Takhts by the Sikhs. Guru Govind Singh was born here on December 22, 1666. Tegh Bahadur Singh, father of Guru Govind Singh was the ninth Guru of the Sikhs who established the pioneering Sikh pilgrimage Anandpur Sahib in Punjab. Guru Gobind Singh was a great warrior and philosopher who inspired a strong bond among the Sikh community. It was Guru Govind Singh who not only united the followers of Guru Nanak but also formalized the identity of the believers as a religious community. He won many battles against the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the first king of the Sikh Empire, took up the reconstructions of this sacred birthplace of the great Guru in 1839. The present gorgeous edifice of Harmandir Takt was reconstructed in 1954 as the earthquake of 1934 destroyed some part of it.





# Heritage

**T**he ancient cities of Bihar boast of some very rich and treasured ancient heritage. The state houses some very exquisite heritage sites which speak volumes for its glorious past. Some of the heritage sites found here dates back to the times of Ramayana and even Mahabharata. After the

Harappa and Mohanjodaro remains, the architectural remains of Rajgir are the oldest one. Bihar has rich historical background. Bodhgaya is home to the tree where Buddha got enlightened. There is temple in Bodhgaya, constructed by Ashoka, in memoir of Buddha. Nalanda is home to the sites of the ancient Buddhist International University. Vaishali is the place where Ashoka made the famous lion-pillar.

Bihar heritage tour includes a tour through the temples, Buddhists shrines, stupas and library that hides within itself the essence of ancient Bihar.

## AGAM KUAN, PATNA

Agam Kuan, the bottomless well, is an ancient relic of the Mauryan Emperor Ashok. Located a little distance away from Ashoka's Charitable Hospital in the Kumrahar complex, is this famous Ashokan remain, the Agam Kuan, which is believed to be a part of the legendary hall created by Ashoka.

## BUDDHA STUPA, VAISHALI

The two stupas in Vaishali are dedicated to Lord Buddha were unearthed here.

### Stupa 1

It is believed that sacred ashes were found enshrined in a casket here.

### Stupa 2

The site was excavated in 1958 and another casket containing the ashes of the Lord Buddha was discovered.

## NALANDA UNIVERSITY, NALANDA

The university stands proof for the prominent role played by India in imparting knowledge. The university had 2000 teachers who taught over 10000 students from all parts of the world.

## HALESHWAR STHAN, SITAMARHI

Haleshwar Sthan is the site where King Janak began ploughing the field for rain and in order found Sita, who married Lord Rama. This place consists of an ancient Shiva temple, which is thought to be the first shivlinga setup in the state of Mithila. Currently, no archeological survey has been made at the site but the manuscripts on the stone located in the region are seemingly 7,000 years old. Savan Mela organised at this place is popular in northern Bihar and Nepal.

## NAVLAKHA PALACE, RAJNAGAR

The palace was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. by Maharaja Rameshwar Singh of Darbhanga.

## JARASANDH KA AKHARA, RAJGIR

The sought-after venue that hosted, indeed, the most historic and exciting battles in the history of ancient India. This larger-than-life battle between the strongest of the Pandavas, Bhima and the ardent worshipper of the rebellion Lord Shiva,

## GOLGHAR, PATNA

Golghar is an outstanding architectural piece. It actually symbolizes Patna. Build in the year 1786, a flight of steps winds round this 29m high building to the top from where one get an amazing view of the river Ganga and Patna city.

## BUXAR FORT, BUXAR

Buxar Fort is known for its constructional brilliance and is considered to be the most valuable treasure of the city of Buxar. Tourists could have a great time in going through the artifacts and carvings of the fort.

## LAURIA NADANGARH, CHAMPARAN

Lauria contains an inscribed Asokan Pillar with fifteen stupa-mounds. Nandangarh about 2 km from Asokan Pillar is a fortified habitation-site.

## MARTYR'S MEMORIAL, PATNA

It is a modern piece of art with life dimension statues of the seven martyrs' in front of the secretariat where they shot in their attempt to hoist the national tricolor.

## MUNGER FORT, MUNGER

Build on a rocky eminence; this is one of the essential monuments of Munger. The fort was constructed during the early time of Islamic ruler.

## ROHTASGARH FORT, SASARAM

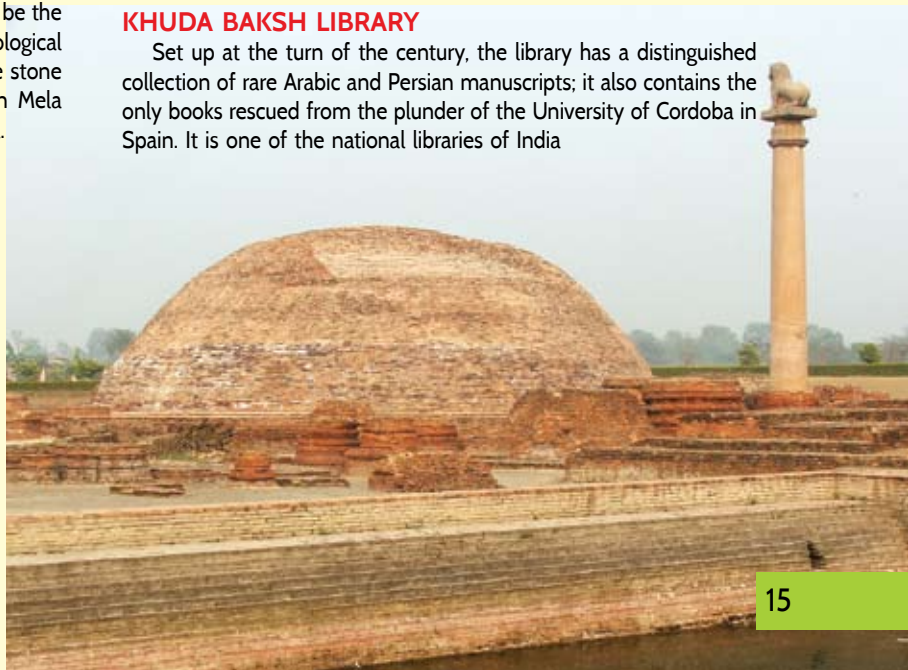
39 kilometers from Sasaram, Rohtasgarh Fort considered as the major and strongest hill forts in India. This fort served as a safe shelter for treasurers and families of Sher Shah Suri, Shah Jahan, Maan Singh, Mir Qasim and others.

## VIKRAMSHILA, BHAGALPUR

Vikramshila situated 252 kms from Patna, in the district of Bhagalpur, is the site of an ancient University, Vikramshila. The university was founded by king Dharmapala, in late 8th century AD. After prosperous for years, it was plundered by invaders around 1200 AD.

## KHUDA BAKSH LIBRARY

Set up at the turn of the century, the library has a distinguished collection of rare Arabic and Persian manuscripts; it also contains the only books rescued from the plunder of the University of Cordoba in Spain. It is one of the national libraries of India





# Culture

**R**eferred as Magadha in ancient texts, Bihar is marked as the place where one of the major religion - Buddhism and one of the major Indian Dynasty - Maurya Dynasty originated. Ancient Bihar, which included regions like Anga, Mithila and Magadha, was a centre of culture, power and education. Ancient Bihar was home to two important Universities - Nalanda and Vikramashila. Home to many historically and culturally important places, Bihar has rich heritage to boast about.

## ARTS AND CRAFTS

**Madhubani Painting:** Otherwise known as Mithila painting, this style of painting is exclusive to Bihar and adjoining Terai region of Nepal. This painting is done with a coloured paste made from rice powder. It is believed to be originated at the time of Ramayana, when King Janak commissioned artists to make paintings for his daughter Sita's marriage with Ram. This painting was originally done on freshly plastered wall but,

now it is made on cloths and canvases as well.

**Patna School of Painting:** Also known as Patna Qalaamas as well as Company Painting, this style of painting is an offshoot of the well-known Mughal Miniature School of Painting.

**Crafts:** Bamboo-made baskets, cups and saucers painted with vivid colours are found in Bihari homes. A special container called pauti woven out of Sikki grass is given to bride as a gift when she leaves for her in-laws after wedding. Cotton

durries and curtains are also found in plenty. Bhagalpur is well-known for its sericulture, making good amount of tusser silk.







## DANCE

Bihar is a land of many types of folk dances which manifest its rich traditions and ethnic identity. Some popular folk dances are: sohrainach, dhobinach, manjhi, jhumarnach, gondnach, more morni, jitiyanach, dom-domin, bhuiababa, kathghorwa nach, rah baba, jat jatin, bamar nach, jharni, jhijhia, launda nach, natua nach, bidapad nach, and gond nach.

## FOLK SONGS

Another interesting thing about the Bihari music is that it has a

very old tradition of folk songs, sung especially during important occasions, such as marriage, birth ceremonies, festivals, etc. These folk songs are usually accompanied musical instruments such as dholak, bansuri, tabla and harmonium. Bihar is also famous for its tradition of lively Holi songs 'Phagua', marked for its fun rhythms.

## THEATRE

Theaters are part of Bihar culture. There are many traditional forms such as Bidesia, Bihula- Sama Chakeva, Bisahari, Bahura-Gorin, Reshma-Chuharmal, Raja Salhesh, and Dom Kach, which originated in the Anga region of Bihar.

## LITERATURE

Bihar has given birth to many writers and scholars, such as Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Ram Avatar Sharma, R. K. Sinha, Raja Radhika Raman Singh, Dr. Bhagwati Sharan Mishra, Shiva Pujan Sahay, Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar', Divakar Prasad Vidyarthi and many more.

## TRADITIONAL ATTIRE

Bihari men wear Dhoti and Kurta while women deck up themselves in sari. Salwar kameez is also popular among Muslim women.

## RELIGIONS

Bihar has many important shrines of all major religions such as Hindu, Muslim, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikh. Hinduism is the main religion whereas Islam is the second largest religion. It is believed that the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh was born in Bihar in 1666 and lived his early life here, before moving to Anandpur. Gautam Buddha was Enlightened at Bodh Gaya in Bihar.

## FAIRS & FESTIVALS

Bihar is a land of festivals. Chhath, Deepawali, Shravani Mela, Teej, Chitragupta Puja, Makar Sankranti, Saraswati Puja, Holi, Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Adha, Muharram, Kali Puja, Ram Navami, Rakshabandhan, Maha Shivaratri, Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Christmas, Mahavir Jayanti, Buddha Purnima, Guru Purab and Bhai Dooj are the important festivals in Bihar.





Litti-Chokha

# Bihar Cuisine, simple yet exotic

**B**ihari food is rather simple food made with fresh indigenous, seasonal ingredients that are treated with simpler techniques. The food tastes of the primary ingredients as the nature has offered – thus, a gourd will taste like a gourd and not drowned in flavours of spices or masala blends. The aromatics and spices used lend a supporting flavour to the taste of the primary ingredient which is seldom lured away except in the persisting background flavour of the mustard oil (which is tamed at the beginning of the cooking, if done right) – the cooking fat of choice per abundance of availability. The daily meal thali at a Bihari Hindu home comprises roti, tarkaari (vegetables), daal, bhat, dahi aur achaar; often accompanied by ghee, p-pad, chatni and sal-d. Poultry, meat, seafood (savoured by Mithila Brahmins) and even eggs are generally cooked only on weekends with a dedicated set of chulh- and utensils.

Bihar cuisine has a long history that can be traced back to the cultures that flourished in this region or to the kingdoms that rose in this territory. The main Bihar food is rice that forms the main course of food. Since the days of the Buddha the staple food of the people of Bihar has been rice. In fact, rice is consumed by all classes and stratas of the people; the only difference is that the rich consumes superior quality of rice than the poor or the mediocre. It is said that rice was served to Huien Tsang at Nalanda. Even, Abul Fazal sings the praise of the rice as a staple Bihar food.

The cuisine of Bihar is predominantly vegetarian, but fish, chicken and mutton are taken sparingly. This is because most of the population of Bihar is mainly Hindus or Buddhists. Biharis use mustard oil for their cooking. The state is famous for dishes such as stuffed parathas, spicy mashed potatoes and fish curry. Dairy products are a must in this state. Commonly buttermilk, ghee, lassi

and butter are used in cooking. The cuisine of Bihar is a mixture of North Indian and East Indian cuisine.

For the non-vegetarians, Bihar food offers the meat of goat, pig, deer, peacock, etc. and fish. In fact, it was believed that offering of meat to the guests was a holy act which was equal to performing the dvadasah (the 12th day) sacrifice. Thus, in spite of being the genesis for Jainism and Buddhism which celebrates ahimsa, slaughter houses thrive in Bihar.

In Bihar, the meal and its associated terms are well defined in the traditional life style by means of specific terms allotted to the various items. The morning meal is traditionally called *Jalpan*, *panpiyai* or *jalkhai*. Panpiyai and lukum is also used to mean the food eaten by the labourer in the intervals of work in the field. The midday meal, which is the main meal of the day, is called *kalewa* or *kaleu*, though

this is also the term used for a light morning repast. An evening meal is *sanjhauwa*, *beyalu* or *ber-hatiy*, which is light food taken just before sleeping.

Some of the popular bihari cuisine are mentioned below:

## Laddoo

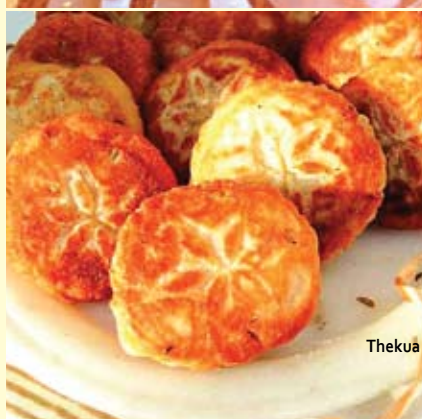
When the talk is about Bihari cuisine, how can one forget the laddoo of Maner. Laddoo is the name given to a sweet-ball made that is made from gram-flour, sugar and ghee. Though you will find laddoos in every sweet shop of Bihar, the ones made in Maner, about 30 km west of Patna, are the best.

## Khaja

Silao village, situated about 15 km from Biharsarif and eight km from Rajgir, is known for its ancient tradition of khaja making. A sweetmeat prepared with maida (wheat-flour), sugar and ghee, it is available in many varieties – Chandshahi, Round, Palvidar and Gandhi Topa. Amongst these, the one with rectangular shape is the most popular.



Laddoo



Thekua





Khaja



Tilkut and Anarsa

### Belgrami

Belgrami is another sweet preparation of Bihar, which is made from cheese, sugar and ghee. The place in Bihar that is most famous for this sweetmeat is Udwantnagar, which falls between Arrah and Buxar.

### Tilkut and Anarsa

Gaya is not only famous for its association with Lord Buddha. It is also known as the place with Tilkut and Anarsa as its specialty. While Tilkut is made from with white sesame seeds (til) and sugar, Anarsa comprises of a combination of rice flour, white sesame seeds and sugar. The Ramna Road of Gaya is the place where you should head to, for tasting these sweets.



Malpua

### Malpua

If you happen to visit Bihar anytime in the future, make sure to taste the luscious malpuas that form a specialty of the state. A malpua is prepared from a combination of maida, milk, banana, grated coconut, cashew nut, raisin, sugar, water and green cardamom, fried in ghee.

### Laai

Barh is a small town in Patna district that lies between Bakhtiarpur and Mokama. It is famous for Laai, a ball or cake-shape sweet that is prepared with 'Khobi' or 'Ramdana' seeds, 'khoa' and sugar.

### Sonpapdi

Sonpapdi is a sweet for which the entire state of Bihar is popular. Still, it forms a specialty of the towns of Buxar and Munger. Sonpapdi

is prepared by combining sugar, gram-flour and ghee.

### Perukia

Perukia, for which Chhapra town of Bihar is famous, is a cake-like preparation. It is prepared by mixing sooji (semolina) or khoa with sugar and wrapping the mixture in thin-leaves made from a mix of maida, water and ghee. The resultant sweet is then deep fried in ghee and served.

### Balushahi

Runi-Saidpur, which falls on the Muzaffarpur-Sitamarhi route, is the town that is famous for its Balushahi. The sweet comprises of a specially treated combination of maida (wheat flour) and sugar, which is cooked with ghee.

### Kheer Makhana

If you have come to Bihar and not tasted Kheer-Makhana, then your trip is as good as incomplete. It is a sweet dish prepared with milk, sugar and makhana, considered to be a specialty of the Darbhanga region of north Bihar.

### Shakarpara and Thekua

Shakarpara and Thekua are the sweets made from maida (wheat flour) and sugar. They are prepared only on special occasions, by straining the combination of maida and sugar in ghee.

## SPECIAL BIHARI FOOD

### Dalpuri

In context of the traditional food of Bihar, dalpuri is the first name that comes to mind. It is basically a type of bread, made of salted wheat flour, which is filled with boiled-crushed gram-pulse that has been fried with special spices. Though mostly a domestic preparation, it can be had in restaurants as well as from roadside-vendors.

### Litti - Chokha

Litti is another main-course dish that forms a part of Bihari cuisine. It is nothing, but wheat flour cake that has been salted and baked. Litti is filled with sattu (fried gram flour) and some special spices and served with ghee. Litti is similar to Bati in appearance but there is a little difference. Litti is best eaten with brinjal bharta or mashed potato. Litti-Chokha is now making its presence internationally.

### Baingan-ka-Bharta

Baingan-ka-Bharta, though not a traditional Bihari dish, can be commonly found in the Bhojpuri speaking belt of North-Western Bihar. It basically comprises of baked Brinjal, treated with spices.

### Kadhi Badi

While this savory dish is an everyday affair, making it on Holi is a must for people from Bihar. Gram flour is the main ingredient for both the kadhi (gravy) and the badi/pakodas.

## Must have Bihari Dishes

### Kala Jamun

Made from *khoa*, *paneer*, milk and sugar, it is absolutely the most delicious sweet to have after a delectable Bihari meal.

### Chana Ghugni

While a lot of Bengal gram is used as stuffing, this particular dish is the Sunday breakfast special. And this spiced up recipe tastes better good too.

### Dal Pitha

The Bihari answer to dumplings! This delicacy, made out of kneaded rice flour, is stuffed with spiced Bengal gram paste and then steamed.

### Laktho

Laktho is a common Bihari household snack seen most often during Dussehra. The rice flour dough is kneaded and deep fried and then dipped into thick jaggery syrup.

### Parwal ki Mithai

Yes! That's a vegetable. Nonetheless it is fantabulous to taste, and is made by stuffing the pointed gourd with khoya, giving it the right balance of sweet, salty and healthy.



# Fairs & Festivals

**F**estivals and fairs have always been an integral part of the Indian civilization. Festivals of Bihar serve as a good break from the monotony of regular life and inspire us to promote love and brotherhood. Not only that the festivals are also meant to work for the social cause for the upliftment of the society. The state of Bihar also has a long list of celebrations. The festivals of Bihar also have a long list of celebrations. The festivals of Bihar can be broadly categorised into two kinds, religious and tribal festivals. Both the kinds of festivals have connection with some or the other legend. The festivals are in fact characterized by joyous ceremonies, enthusiasm paralleled with ample fun and celebration. The religious festivals of Bihar draw pilgrims from the remotest parts of the country. The tribal festivals showcase the culture wealth of the state, which can be observed vibrantly in myriad colours and forms.

## Chhath Puja

Chhath is a major Hindu festival celebrated in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, along with other North Indian states. Almost all civilizations have worshipped the 'sun god', but it has a unique form in Bihar. Chhath Puja is the only occasion where the setting sun is worshipped.

This festival is celebrated after the completion of Diwali, which generally falls in the months of October and November. Chhath Puja is dedicated to Sun God for supporting life on earth and ensuring prosperity and happiness in life.

According to Hindu calendar, Chhath Puja is celebrated on the sixth day of Kartik month. Chhath Puja, also known as Surya Shashti, is a bathing festival followed by a four day period of abstinence and

ritual purity. This festival is widely observed in Bihar where a large number of sun temples are present. These sun temples are generally surrounded by a surajkund, also known as sacred pool of sun, which constitute of the place of worship for the devotees. Traditionally, Chhath Puja is performed by women, however large number of men also register their presence during this festival.

Chhath Puja is a four-day long strict and spiritual observance. The first day of the Chhath Puja includes taking a dip in the holy river Ganges. People also take the water of Ganges to their home to perform special offerings and rituals. Houses are thoroughly cleaned on this day. The second day of Chhath, also known as Kharna, involves devotees to observe a day long fast which is broken in the late evening after performing the worship of Mother Earth. The offerings to the God include rice pudding (kheer) and fruits, which is distributed among family members and friends. The third day of Chhath goes in the preparation of the prasad (offerings) for the evening offerings, also known as Sanjhiya Arghya.

In the evening, large numbers of devotees gathers on the banks of river Ganga and make offerings (Arghya) to the setting sun. The folk songs are played in the evening displaying the culture and history of Bihar. Nowadays popular Bollywood songs are remixed and played during this occasion. The night of the third day witnesses a colorful event known as Kosi. A canopy is made from five sugarcane sticks and lighted earthen lamps are placed inside canopy along with baskets filled prasad. On the fourth and final day of Chhath, family members and friends go to the banks of river before sunrise and make offerings (Aragh) to the rising sun. After this ritual, devotees break their fast and distribute prasad to neighbors and relatives.







### Sonepur Mela Fair

The annual Sonepur Fair in Bihar is an authentic rural fair that combines spirituality with elephant, cattle, and horse trading. It gets underway on the auspicious Hindu holy occasion of Kartik Purnima, when pilgrims take an early morning bath in the river, and continues for around three weeks. Street magicians, spiritual gurus, snack stalls, handicrafts, amusement rides, circus performers, and theater all create a carnival like no other. The Fair also commemorates the intervention of Lord Vishnu to end a great curse and long fight between elephant and crocodile in Hindu mythology. The elephant was saved, after bathing in the river and being attacked by the crocodile, by Lord Vishnu. Traditionally known as a cattle fair, while still wonderfully off the beaten path.

### Sama-Chakeva

It is during the winter season that the birds from the Himalayas migrate towards the plains. With the advent of these colourful birds, celebration of sama-chakeva is done. This is a festival especially celebrated in Mithila. Mithilanchal dedicates this festival to the celebration of the brother-sister relationship. It represents the tradition of this land as well as the art of making idols. This festival starts with the welcoming of the pair of birds sama-chakeva. Girls make clay idols of various birds and decorate them in their own traditional ways. Various



rituals are performed and the festival joyfully ended with the 'vidai' of sama and with a wish that these birds return to this land the next year.

### Makar-Sankranti

Also known as Tila Sankranti, the festival marks the beginning of the summer season. People believe that from this day on, the days become longer and the heat of the sun also increases. Every year it is observed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January. In Raigir, people celebrate Makar Sankranti in the month of Paus which is January in Gregorian calendar. Devotees make flower offerings to the deities in the temples at Hot springs and bathe in the holy water. At Mandar hill in Banka district, the festival is celebrated with pomp and a huge fair is also held at the place. According to belief, the famous 'Panchjanya' snake of Lord Krishna was found here. Traces, akin to serpent coil can be seen around the hill and it is believed that the snake god offered himself to be used as a rope for churning the ocean to obtain the nectar. People celebrate it by giving offerings to the poor. Makar Sankranti has special importance for every Hindu. This is the day when the Sun God begins its ascendancy and enters into the Northern Hemisphere. Like Greeks, Hindus too give great importance to the Sun God. Sun for the Hindus stands for Pratyaksha-Brahman - the manifest God, who symbolizes non-dual, self-effulgent and glorious divinity blessing one



& all tirelessly. Gayatri mantra, which is from Rig-Veda, was specifically crafted for the worship of Sun God.

### Bihula

Bihula is a prominent festival of eastern Bihar especially famous in Bhagalpur district. There are many myths related to this festival. People pray to goddess Mansa for the welfare of their family. This festival is observed every August and prayers are offered to Goddess Mansa. The festival nurses the brilliant Manjusha Art, which is as magnificent as the other folk arts of Bihar like Jadopetiya of Santhal Parganas and Madhubani paintings of Mithilanchal. The principal aim of Bihula or Bishahri is to please the Goddess Bishahri in order to save people from the wrath of snakes. They depict sketches of various characters and thus present a vivid description of the entire mythology attached to Bishahri puja.

### Madhushravani

This festival is celebrated all over Mithilanchal with much enthusiasm. It is celebrated in the month of Sawan (Hindu calendar), which falls around August. This festival carries a message with itself. It teaches how to weave together religion and tradition in day-to-day life. MadhuShravani Puja represents the arrival of monsoon season. It is observed by married women. During this festival, women worship Naga devatas (Serpent Gods), Gauri, Shanti Kalash, Surya, Chandrama, Navagrah, and several Nags such as Nag dampati, Bairasi along with hundred brothers, Chanai, Kusumawati, Pingla, Lili, Gosauni nag with seven sisters, and lastly Shasthi or sathi.

During the festival of Madhushrava Tritiya, newly married girls stay at their parent's home. Stay with parents during Shravan or at least during this festival is considered necessary. Presents (Bhar) are sent from Groom's family to Brides family. Traditionally the bride is supposed to eat only things sent from her husband's home. At least five (Sadhawa) married women accompany the bride while eating.

### Muslim Festivals

The Muslim festivals in Bihar are celebrated with equal pomp and show and all the communities take the same interest in these festive celebrations as well. The important Muslim festivals celebrated in Bihar are Muharram, the two Eid's and Shab-e-Barat.

### Jivitputrika Vrat

Jivitputrika Vrat, also known as Jiwit Putra or Jitiya fasting, is observed on the eighth day in the waning phase (Ashtami of Krishna Paksha) of the Ashwin Month. Jitiya Fast is observed for the well being of the sons by mothers. Jituya, or a red and yellow thread, is worn by mothers who undertake this fasting. The thread is removed only when it is worn out. Jivitputrika Vrat is not dedicated to a particular Hindu deity. The main aim of the Vrat is the long life of sons. After early morning bath and prayers, mothers start the fast and do not take any food during the whole day.

Usually, Jitiya fasting is performed as community puja and there will be bhajans and narration of Jivitputrika Vrat Katha. The rituals associated with the Vrat vary from region to region but the purpose is the same.

### Vata Savitri Purnima

A highly auspicious festival, Vata Purnima, also known as Vata Savitri Purnima or Jyeshtha Purnima, is celebrated by married women to prolong their husbands' health and lead a happy married life. This famous festival is commemorated by the Hindus throughout India and abroad where Hindus reside. The festival is dedicated to Sati Savitri and Goddess Gauri. On this religious occasion, married women observe a vrat, or fast, on the full moon day during the month of Jyeshtha as per the Hindu calendar. Though more popular in Gujarat and Maharashtra, the Vata Savitri Purnima vrat is also observed in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Orissa.





# Textiles & Handicrafts

## Madhubani Paintings

Madhubani Paintings in Bihar is a craft practiced in Mithilanchal. This is a creative folk painting done by women in the traditional way. These paintings portray symbolic motifs, and religious scenes. For paintings natural colors are used, which range from red, yellow, green, ochre, brown and black. Originally, these painting were done by women on the walls of their houses, while these days the paintings are professionally produced on paper, canvas and textiles for international and national exhibitions.

## Khatwa

Khatwa is the name given to appliqué works in Bihar. Khatwa is about designing by cutting of one fabric and stitching the pieces to another fabric. Khatwa is mainly used to create designer tents, canopies, shamianas and much more. Making of such tents involves work by both men and women. While cutting of clothes is done by men, women use their expertise in stitching part. Khatwa is also used

in designing women garments as well.

## Sikki Art

The sikki grass articles made by women of north Bihar are entirely different from anything else, which you see in any other part of the country. They transport you into another world. As the very name indicates, sikki is a plant, which automatically grows by the riverside or roadside of rural area. The places where there is moisture are also suitable for the growth of this plant.

## Bhagalpur Silk

Bhagalpur is known as Silk City as it is famous worldwide for its silk production. This silk is of a distinct and special type. It is known as Tussah or Tusser Silk. Bhagalpur silk is a household name in India and the lovers of Bhagalpur silk fabrics are found all over the India. Silk weaving is an age-old traditional household industry of Bhagalpur.





# Investment Opportunities

**B**ihar is fast becoming the most desired place for making investments. It is the single most important source of minerals such as coal, iron ore and bauxite in India. Due to its fertile soil base, large variety of agricultural commodities are produced here, such as paddy, wheat, lentils, sugarcane, jute, etc. However, large and small business houses exist in the area of mining and extraction, textiles, sugar mills, rice mills, oil refineries, cement, steel, fertilizers, automobiles and engineering products. There is also availability of skilled and educated workforce. Besides, a vast potential exists in the tourism sector.

## Agriculture

The people of Bihar are largely dependent on agriculture and allied activities for earning their livelihood. Due to flow of several rivers and streams, the land is most fertile over here. Bihar has a total geographical area of about 93.60 lakh hectare, out of which only 56.03 lakh hectare is the net cultivated area and gross cultivated area being 79.46 lakh hectare. About 33.51 lakh hectare net area and 43.86 lakh hectare gross area receive irrigation from different sources. Principal food crops are paddy, wheat, maize and pulses. Main cash crops are sugarcane, potato, tobacco, oilseeds, onion, chillies, jute and roselle. Industries based on agricultural products like sugar mills, edible oil mills, spices and other agro based industries have a good demand and export potential. Besides, Bihar has notified forest area of 6,764.14 sq km, which is 7.1 per cent of its geographical area.

Bihar is the leading state in the production of fruits and vegetables. It is the first largest producer of vegetables and second largest producer of fruits in the country. There exists huge scope of investment in the food-processing sector in the state. Private sector participation is being encouraged in packaging and food processing sectors to ensure better quality. Also, the State welcomes private investment for comprehensive development of tea industry and capital subsidy is available for setting up tea processing units.

## Sugar Industry

Sugar industry is the largest agro-based industry in Bihar. This industry generates sizeable employment in the farm sector directly as well as through ancillary industries and related activities. It is estimated that about five lakh farmers and their dependents are engaged in the cultivation of sugarcane and approximately another half a lakh unskilled and skilled personnel, including highly qualified and trained technologists are engaged in the sugar industry in the State. Investment opportunities in sugar and allied industries in Bihar are in the Green field sugar mills; Capacity expansion of existing sugar mills; Ethanol manufacture; Manufacturing of Molasses based alcohol and commercial spirit; Cogeneration of power; Manufacture of bagasse- based paper; Press- mud based organic manure; Engineering units related to sugar industry and Manufacture of sugar-based confectionery items.

## Textiles

Textile sector offers huge potential to the investors. The State

has strong weaving traditions. The total number of weavers in the State is over 90,000. The major locations for the textile industry are Bhagalpur, Gaya, Nalanda, Darbhanga, Madhubani, Siwan and Patna. Bihar is the country's second State after West Bengal in jute production and jute textiles. Due to availability of raw jute, cheap labour, sufficient power, water and transportation in northern part of Bihar, some jute mills are located in this region. Jute mills are located in Karbisganj in Purnia district, Katibar, Muktapur in Samstipur district.

## Tourism Industry

In Bihar, tourism is increasingly becoming an important industry. Rich farmlands and lush orchards are spread throughout the state. Important places of tourist interest are:- Rajgir, Nalanda, Vaishali, Pawapuri (where Lord Mahavira breathed his last and attained Nirvana), Bodh Gaya, Vikramshila (ruins of Buddhist University of higher learning), Gaya, Patna (ancient city of Patliputra), Sasaram (tomb of Shershah Suri) and Madhubani (known for famous Madhubani Paintings). However, much can be done in terms of investment in the tourism sector in Bihar -

- Investments can be made in construction of star-hotels as there are not many world-class hotels in the state. The concept of Amusement Parks is fast growing all over India and some interesting concepts for amusement parks can also be explored in Bihar.
- On the infrastructure front, a ropeway is already under construction and projects can be taken up to develop wayside amenities along the major national highway in Bihar.
- Keeping in mind the popularity of Gaya, flight connection to the destination can be increased, especially flights from Delhi, which currently stands at one-flight a day.
- One can also explore the possibility to start air taxi services between Patna to Gaya and also other cities in Bihar.
- The option of River Cruising can also be explored in the region.

## Other Industries

Major Industries in the state are Railway Wagon Plants of Bharat Wagon Limited at Muzaffarpur and Mokamah; Oil Refinery of Indian Oil Corporation at Barauni; Fertilizer Manufacturing Plant of Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Limited (HPCL) at Barauni and Pyrites Phosphates and Chemicals Limited (PPCL) at Amjhor; Cotton Spinning Mills at Siwan, Pandaul, Bhagalpur, Mokamah and Gaya; 13 sugar mills in private sector and 15 in the public sector located in south and north Bihar with a total crushing capacity of 45,000 TPD. In addition, distilleries at Gopalganj, West Champaran, Bhagalpur and Riga (in Sitamarhi district); finished Leather Industry in West Champaran, Muzaffarpur and Barauni; medicine manufacturing unit at Hajipur; food processing units as also Vanaspati Manufacturing Units at Aurangabad and Patna; besides Kalyanpur Cement Limited at Banjari, are notable in the industrial map of Bihar.