



BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

**TEMPLES AND LEGENDS
OF
BIHAR**

P. C. Roy Choudhury

GENERAL EDITORS

K. M. MUNSHI

R. R. DIWAKAR



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SHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, I-89-i

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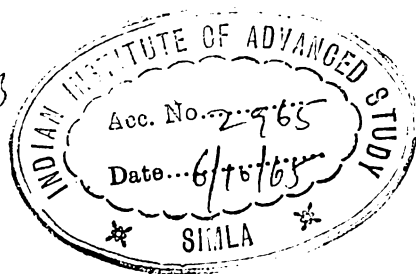


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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 2.50.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may be

come the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere". After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita* which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

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scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,
NEW DELHI,
3rd October, 1951.

K. M. MUNSHI

PREFACE

The Sanskrit word *Vihar* means monastery and it is only natural that the State of Bihar should have a very large number of temples. Most of the temples of Bihar were built of bricks and have been subject to the ravages of time. The relics of ancient Pataliputra are mostly in bricks. Nalanda and Rajgir have both brick and stone temples. The images are usually of black stone and there is an abundant supply of stone—hard and soft—for making the images within the State. Many of the temples that we now see in Bihar are not very old. The temple of Mundeśwari near Bhabua in Shahabad district, which has been described in the text, is commonly accepted as the oldest temple in Bihar. But the legends clearly indicate that there must have been many more ancient temples in different parts of Bihar. It may be worthwhile to have an inquiry as to whether some of the temples have not replaced older ones. This question arises because we see temples that are not very old, in which more ancient deities are installed. The temples of Lord Shiva at Deoghar (Santal Parganas district), at Singheshwarsthan (Saharsa district) and at Sonepur (Saran district) are instances. Legends and historic data definitely show that at many places the deities are more ancient than the temples.

The temples of Bihar do not all have the curvilinear *sikharas* that are said to be the common type throughout North India. The temples particularly in North Bihar are of a different type, while those in South Bihar usually follow the pattern of temples with *sikharas*. With the exception of the Buddha Gaya temple, which is built of stone, and a few other temples, Bihar temples, as a rule,

are not covered with sculpture from top to bottom. That is why they do not always present that splendid appearance which the temples of Bhubaneswar or Khajuraho present. Some of the temples have remarkably independent styles. The famous temple of Baidyanath at Deoghar, the Shiva temple at Basukinath in Santal Parganas, the Vishnupada temple at Gaya, and also some other temples in North Bihar, have got simple but ample domes covering the shrine. In some cases the pillars of the *mandapa*, if made of stone, are carved and in some cases they are not. Some of the brick-built temples have also a simple decorative design. Rock-cut temples are very few. Colgong and Umga rock-cut temples in Gaya district are good specimens. We have in Bihar excellent rock-cut sculpture in the temples at Sultanganj, Mandar and at other places, although such specimens are not many.

The temple types in Tirhut were studied by Dr. D. V. Spooner, whose lecture on the subject was published in the *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*.^{*} Dr. Spooner's article still remains an authority. He has mentioned that the temples in North Bihar follow several types from the constituents of the simplest form of temples to more artistic and complicated styles. He has pointed out that a temple in Chapra looks remarkably like a church. A rather modern temple at Harinagar in Champaran district, which Dr. Spooner does not mention, is also built almost like a church with a steeple. This style has been followed at other places also. Some temples in North Bihar are with domes. A few temples again show a strong Indo-Islamic influence. All this shows that the architecture or the temple types in Bihar have had a comparative

^{*} *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol. II, Part, II (Patna).

freedom from the conventional mode and vision of the temples of North India.

The Jain temples scattered over various places in Bihar are remarkable specimens. They, however, follow the same pattern of the Jain temples in other parts of India. They are highly decorative and conventional.

It appears that the temple sculpture in Bihar was not much cared for. But it was not absolutely neglected as some of the relics of the Gupta age would indicate. At Kandaha, in Saharsa district, there is a Sun temple where the door jambs were found thickly coated with mud and filth, covering a wonderful specimen indicating a revival of stone carving in the 15th century A.D. The mud and filth have had to be scraped before the sculpture could be seen. Some of the very recent temples, like the Dharamnath temple of Chapra or the Gautam temple of Revelgunj, have a very noteworthy sculpture—a sculpture that has undergone progressive modernisation. These edifices have a striking Indo-Islamic touch.

Many of the images enshrined in the temples are wonderful specimens of art, superb in style and expression and clearly superior to the architectural features of the structures that are housing them. Most of the images of the Gupta era found in Kurkihar and elsewhere have been exquisitely carved and have a radiant look. The Buddha image found at Sultanganj, and now preserved in the Birmingham Museum, has evoked the admiration of the world.

Temples in India are intimately associated with archaeological remains. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that, although most of the present-day temples in Bihar are not very old, Bihar has splendid archaeological remains dating

back to very early times. In Rajgir we have probably the earliest archaeological finds in the whole of Eastern India, in the shape of a fortification wall and various other stone specimens. Indeed Bihar has numerous archaeological remains of the Mauryan and later ages and there are a number of *stupas*, *chaityas*, excavated caves, inscriptions, rock edicts, pillars, etc. Spread all over the State are unexcavated mounds and sites which may still yield valuable specimens and, probably, the remains of temples. Some of these places are Jankigarh, near Narkatiaganj railway station in Champaran district, Panchpahari and Chotapahari in the vicinity of Patna, Gorodih in Bhagalpur district and Ghorakatora in Gaya district. There are also art remains of the Sunga-Kusana period and the following ages. The Bihar specimens of sculptural art, structural remains, terracottas, etc. have achieved world-wide renown. Even now some excavations are going on at Vaishali, in Muzaffarpur district, and at Patharghatta, in Bhagalpur district, yielding rich finds. Both the places had ancient temples. Patharghatta is said to be the site of the ancient Vikramshila University. Various coins of different periods have also been found in Bihar. In spite of the fluvial action many of the inscriptions that have been found supply fertile historical data. Bihar sculpture found its best artistic expression in the bronzes of Kurkihar and Nalanda.

It is extremely unfortunate that the temples of Bihar, excepting one or two like the Buddha Gaya temple, have received very little attention from the scholars. Quite a few of the temples have inscriptions which do not appear to have been studied properly as yet, with regard to their wider implications.* Here only a few temple inscriptions

* See *Select Inscriptions of Bihar*, by Prof. Radha Krishna Choudhury (1958).

will be mentioned. In the Maniar temple at Rajgir, we have inscriptions in the Kushana character of the first century A.D. There are a number of inscriptions of the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya. The Narsingh temple of Gaya has also an inscription. The Sun temple at Kandaha, in Saharsa district, has an inscription on the stone door-frames and mentions the names of three kings of the Oinwara dynasty. The Akshaibat temple at Gaya records the erection of two *lingas*. The Krishnadwarika temple inscription in Gaya is an invocation to Vasudeva and records the erection of a temple of Janardan. The Aphsad and Shahpur inscriptions, along with the Mandar Hill and Deoghar inscriptions definitely indicate Adityasena's sovereignty in eastern Bihar and the South. Numerous images have inscriptions too, as, for instance, the Kurkihar images. There is no doubt that these inscriptions are of great value and will yield rich historical material.

It will be of some interest to note that a close scrutiny will reveal that many purely Buddhist images are now worshipped as Hindu Gods, though in iconographic details they do not conform to those of the latter deities. Big statues of the Buddha in Gaya district are worshipped as *Vairabah* or as other deities of the Hindu pantheon, while at Koluha (Hazaribagh district) Jain images are worshipped as Hindu deities. The famous image worshipped as Ugratara at Maheshi village, referred to in the text, is really not the image of Ugratara. Iconographic tradition would have it that Ugratara has a fearful attitude with a garland of human heads on her neck and with her feet resting on a dead body. The image at Maheshi temple does not show any of these details. She appears to be Khadiravani Tara. Khadiravani Tara, or the saviouress of the *Khadira* (catechu) forest, is an emanation of the

Dhyani Buddha Amoghasiddhi, who is taken to be a condensation of the Green cosmic colour. In order to show her origin, the Khadiravani deity usually has, on her crown, a miniature figure of her sire with the *Abhaya Mudra*. Khadiravani is two-armed, showing the *Varada Mudra* in the right hand and *Utpala* (night lotus) in the left and is accompanied by the two goddesses Asokakanta Marici and Ekajata. Sometimes the companion deities are not present.* It is, indeed, very interesting to find that for centuries the worship of one form of Tara has been substituted for another form of that deity. This is, no doubt, a matter for research and one who goes deep into the study of the temples and legends will find many such cases of transposition. When we say Durga image in Bihar, it may mean, in common parlance, the image of any one of several Hindu female deities.

The religiosity of the people in Bihar has found a recent expression in the Kaliji temple at Bettiah, established by one of the Bettiah Maharajas a few decades back. This temple is very little known outside Champaran district. The Maharaja had collected about 480 images of Hindu deities from all over India. He had installed them in this temple. Each and every image is duly worshipped even now by a large number of *Pujaris*. The Maharaja had made endowments for the proper maintenance of this fine institution. This temple with its 480 images of the Hindu pantheon is a marvellous institution. No student of ancient Indian history and culture should fail to visit this Kaliji temple at Bettiah.

The legends associated with the temples of Bihar make the temples all the more interesting. Bihar is, verily,

* See Dr. B. Bhattacharji's *Buddhist Iconography* (Calcutta-Firm K. L. Mukhopadhyaya).

the confluence of different religious creeds. Various currents of Hinduism like Saivism, Vaishnavism, Tantricism, Buddhism in its different phases, Jainism, Sikhism etc., had found millions of adherents in Bihar. Naturally the legends form a very rich fund. The whole of North Bihar is practically saturated with the cult of Sri Ramchandra and Sita. This is no wonder because North Bihar contains Mithila where Rama's consort, Sita, was born. Magadha has, naturally, legends more associated with Buddhism and Jainism. Chotanagpur had been visited by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the cult of Vaishnavism had won over even a large number of the Adivasis in Chotanagpur. The Jagannath cult had found its expression in a number of Jagannath temples in Chotanagpur. Vaishnavism had brought Bengal and Orissa much nearer to Bihar.

A scientific study of the many legends associated with the Bihar temples has yet to be undertaken. The same legend has taken different shapes in different areas for different reasons. The reasons, if delved in, would indicate different culture-complexes. The legends associated with the temples have got a cherished place in the villages. Many of the songs that have been recited from generation to generation in marriages, or when the bride goes to her husband's place for the first time, centre round the legends of Sri Ramchandra and Sita. The temple legends, particularly of North Bihar, have found expression in folk-songs, folk-tales, ballads and proverbs. Even the social customs show the impact of such legends. A son-in-law's place in the family in Mithila is certainly much higher than that of a son-in-law in Magadha or Anga and this is said to be due to the fact that Sri Ramchandra was a son-in-law of Mithila. In some cases the temple-legends have changed into stories that have found currency among the

worshippers of the Godlings of Bihar. The Godlings of Bihar or the *Gramya Devatas* are legion and some of the Godlings are the presiding deities of particular castes. Very few of such Godlings have a regular temple and they are mostly represented by mounds of earth. The *Baghaunt* Godling is worshipped by the forest-dwellers and those who have to go to the forest for their work. Naturally they are anxious to propitiate the God who controls the tiger. Here also the legendary Lorik, the *Ahir* boy belonging to the cowherd class, who fought the tiger single-handed, had won blessings from a Hindu God. The stories of *Goreya Baba*, another Godling, are other instances. The base of most of the Godling-creeds is Hinduism and the legends connected with the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* etc., have freely been incorporated for such worship.

The temples and legends in a particular State show how some of the cultural trends of different areas have cut across the zonal barriers. As a matter of fact, when the communications had not developed and travelling was not easy, it was the temples that, in a way, determined the main routes of communications and the trends of thoughts and exchange of ideas. The legends have never had any geographical limits. Visvamitra's *ashram* is fondly taken to have been in different parts of Bihar and beyond the State confines. It can well be said that the temples and legends of Bihar show a certain cultural affinity with Nepal, on the one hand, and Bengal, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, on the other.

Any one who has recently visited the site of the Heavy Engineering Corporation near Ranchi will be struck by the huge factories and the thousands of houses that have grown up and are growing rapidly to build a great town in an area where there were small Adivasi villages with

PREFACE

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groves, rocks and jungles with patches of terraced cultivation. The only old remnant that remains is the Jagarnath temple at Jagarnathpur. The new town is being rightly named after Lord Jagarnath. The old Jagarnath temple on a rock brings a nostalgic memory to one who has known the place for four decades and underlines the fact that the temples and legends are India's great heritage.

PATNA:
November 8, 1963.

P. C. ROY CHOUDHURY

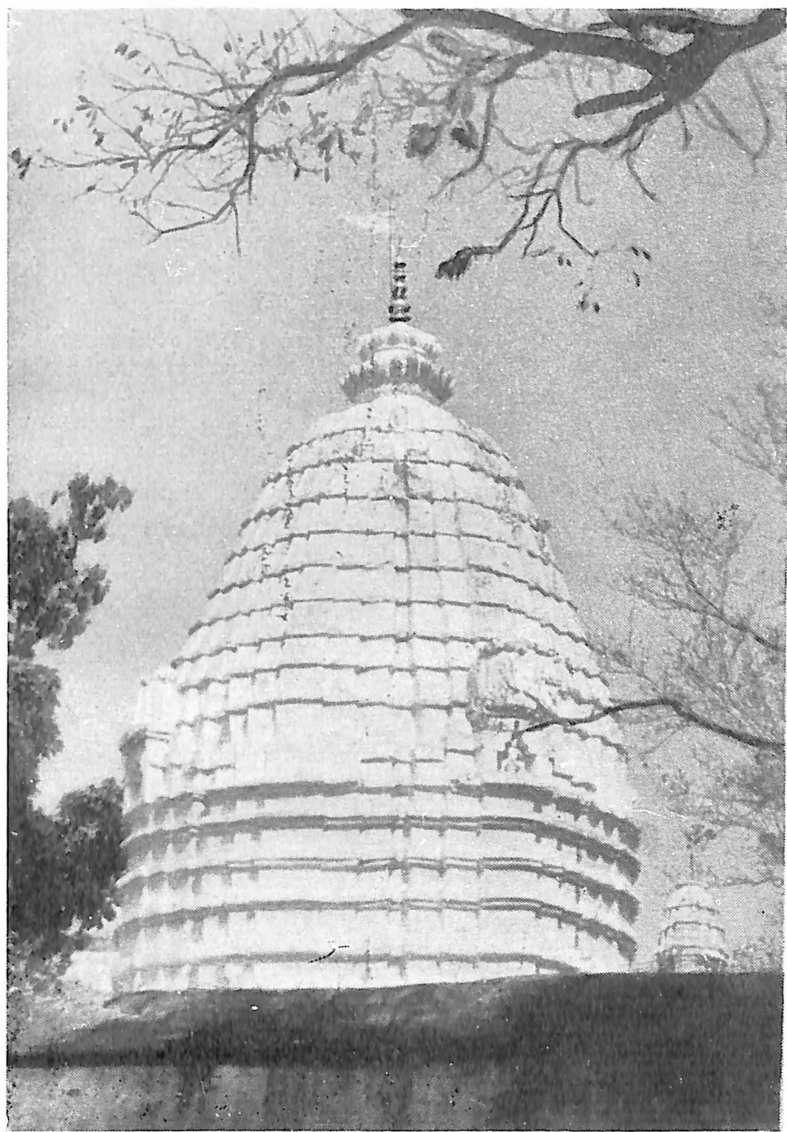
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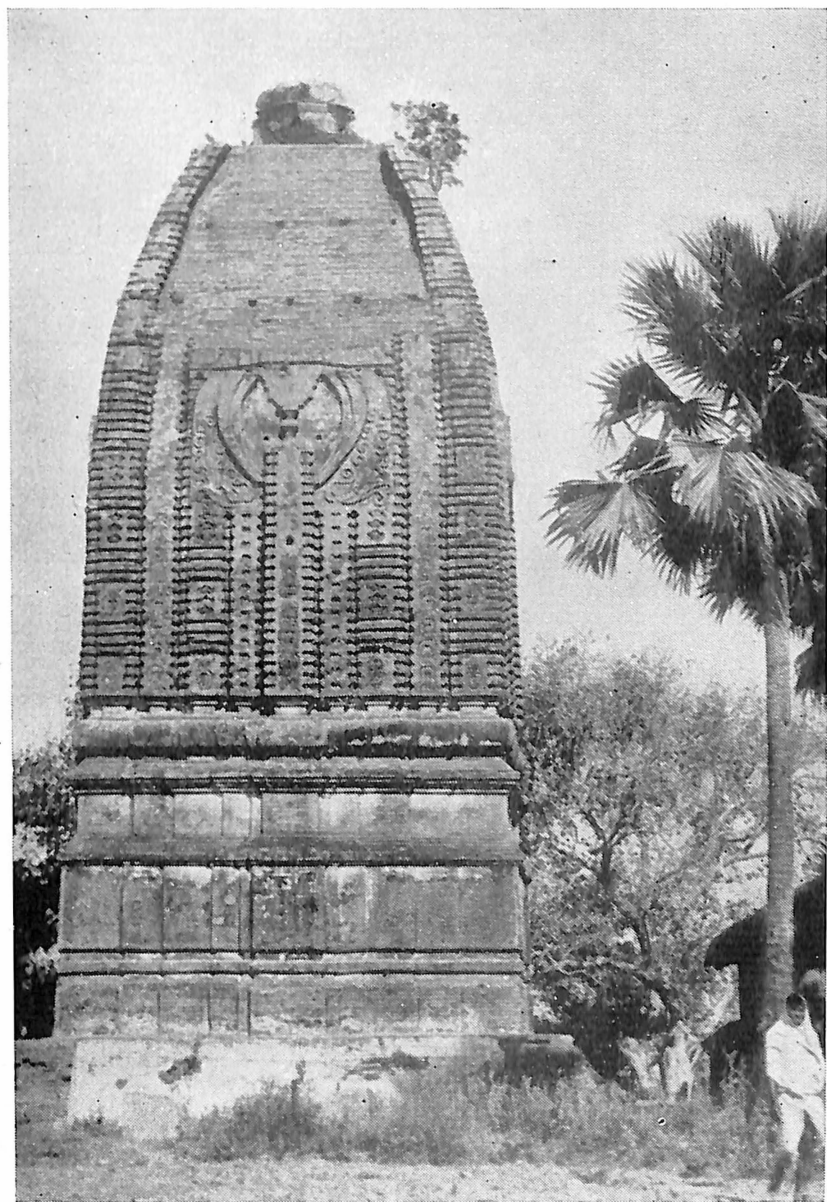


Ma Paudi Temple, Seraikella—General View

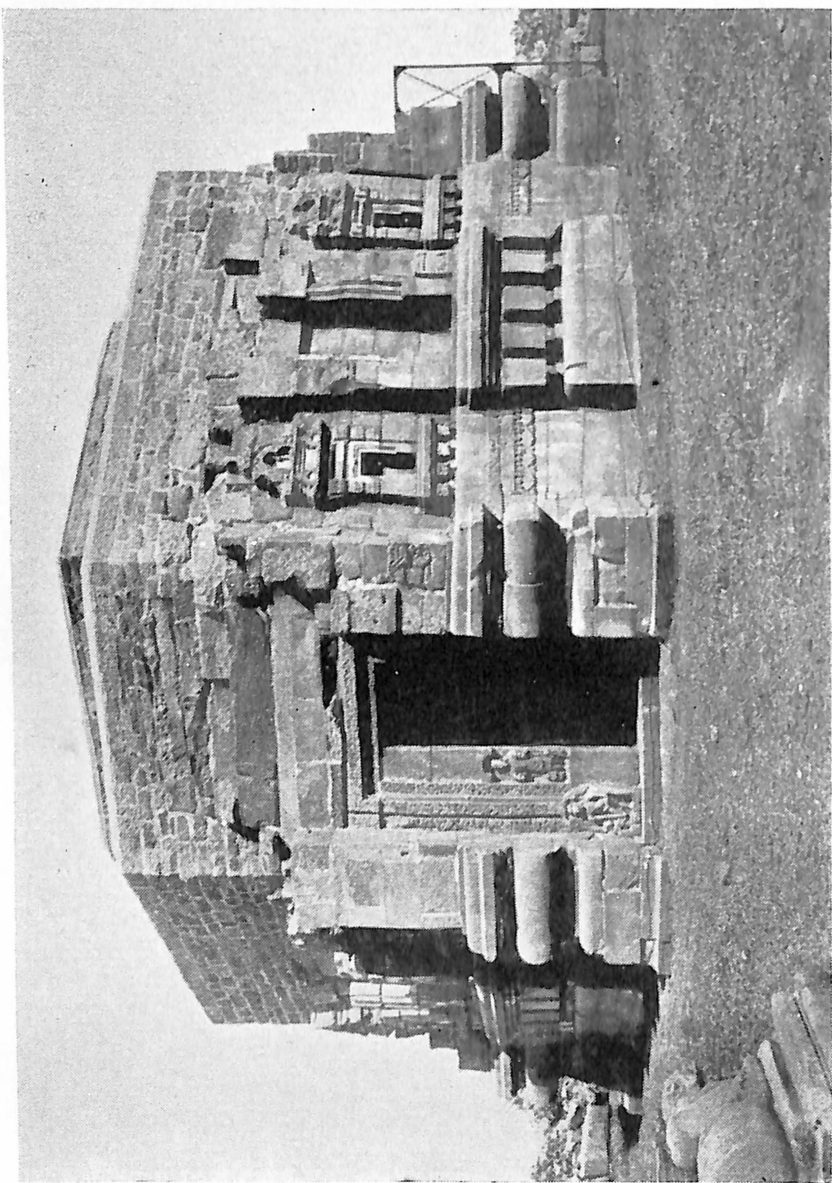
(Courtesy, Sri N. N. Singhdeo)



Benusagar—Seated Deity, Gupta Period

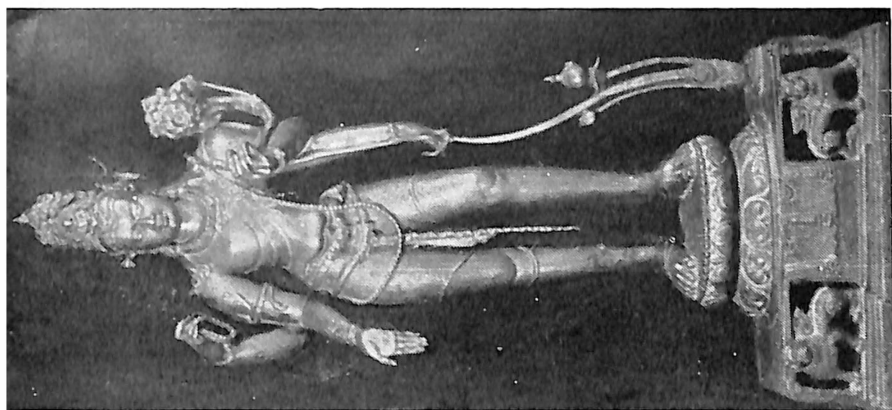


Konch Temple—General View

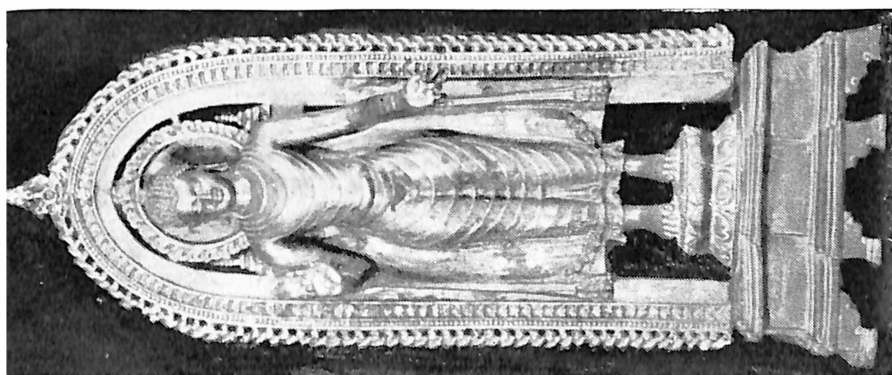


Mundesvari Temple—Side View

(Courtesy, Department of Archaeology)



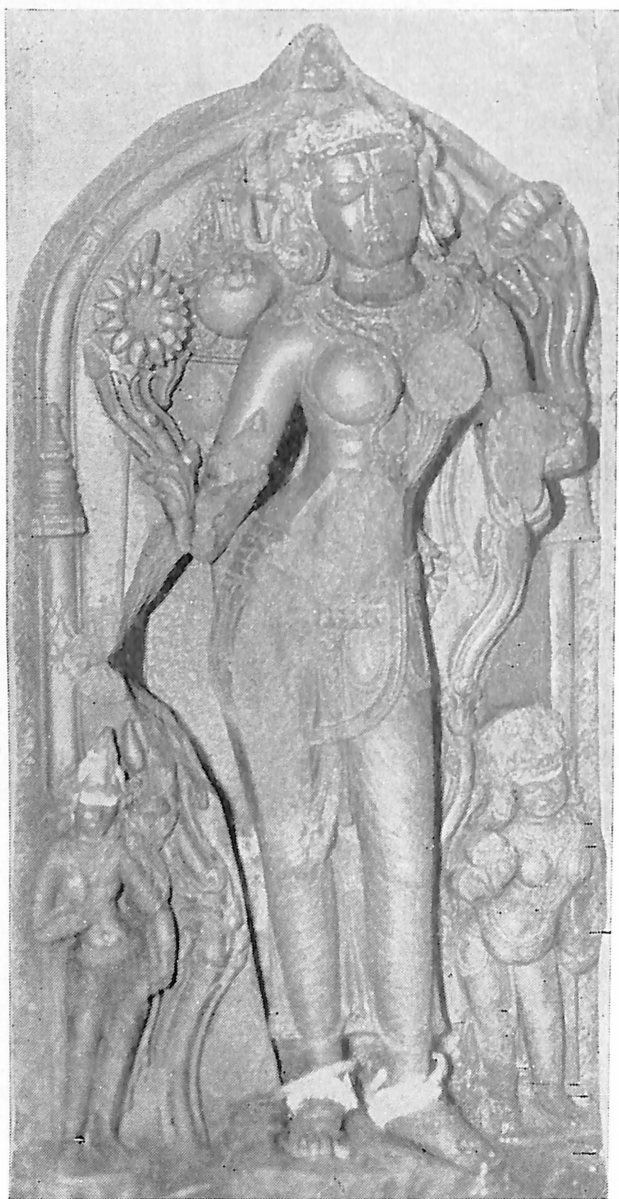
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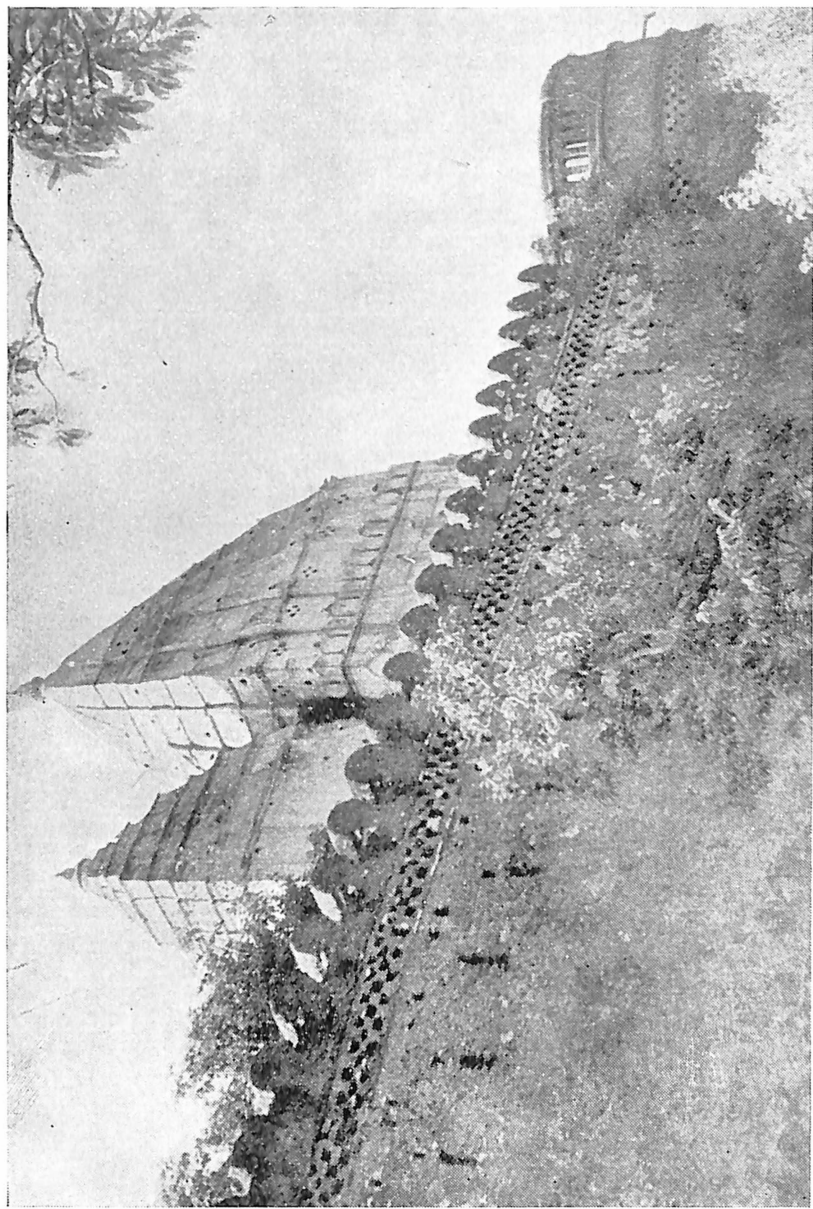
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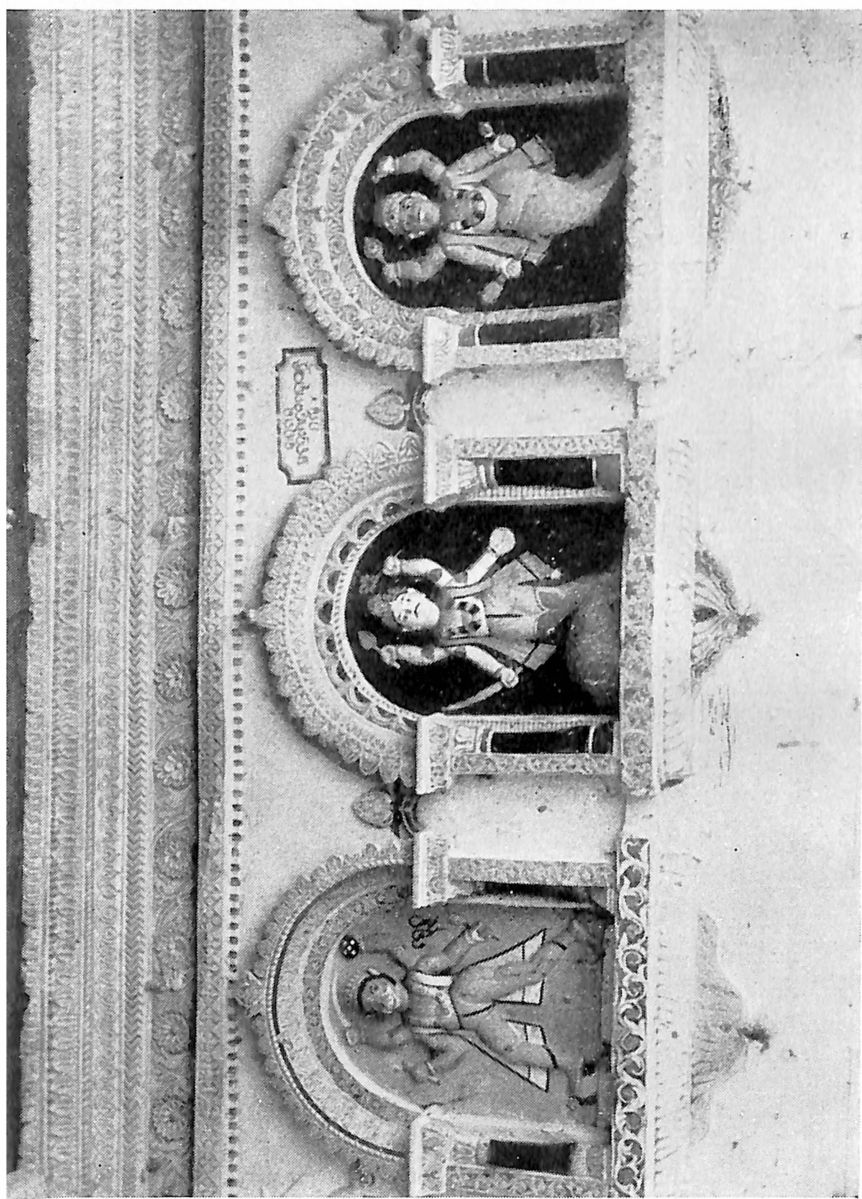
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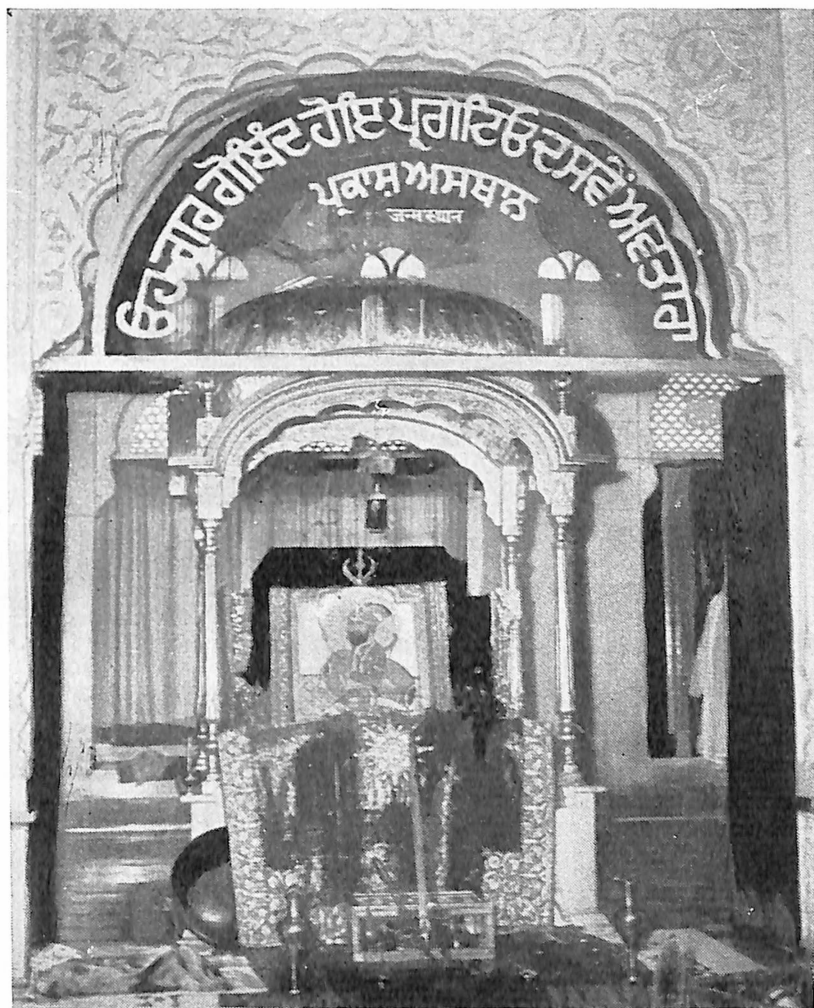
Maheshi—Khadirvani Tara
(Courtesy Photo, Sri P. C. Singh)



Jagarnath Temple, Jagarnathpur—Side View

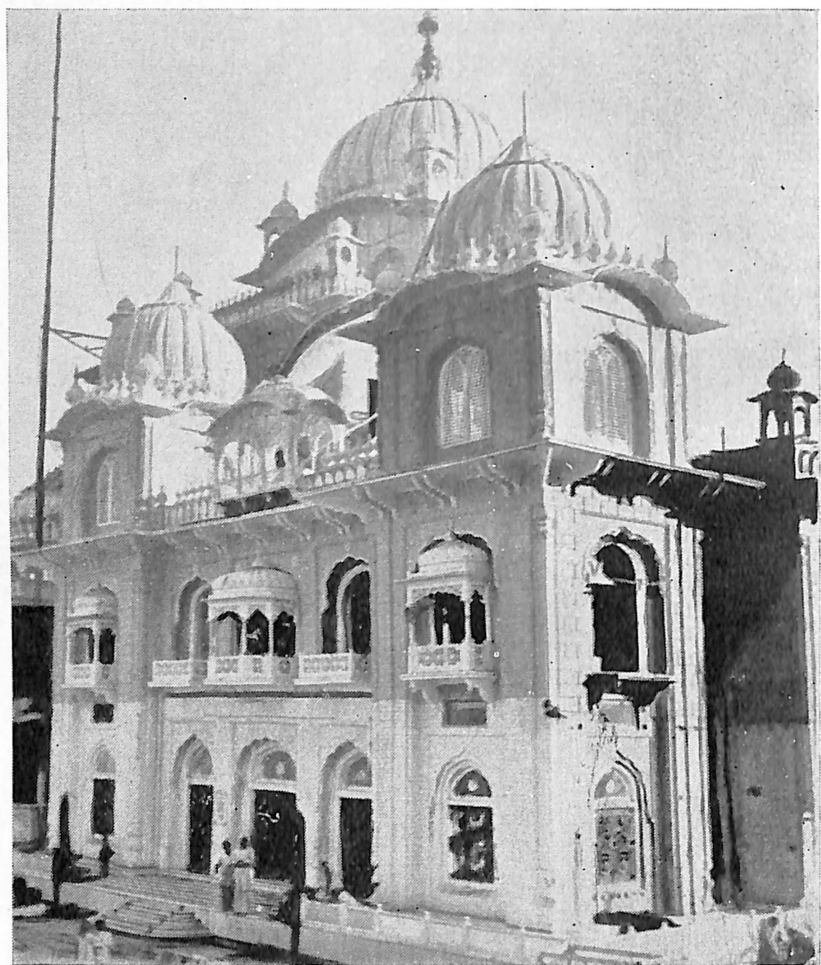


Jagannath Temple, Jagannathpur—Images in Niches

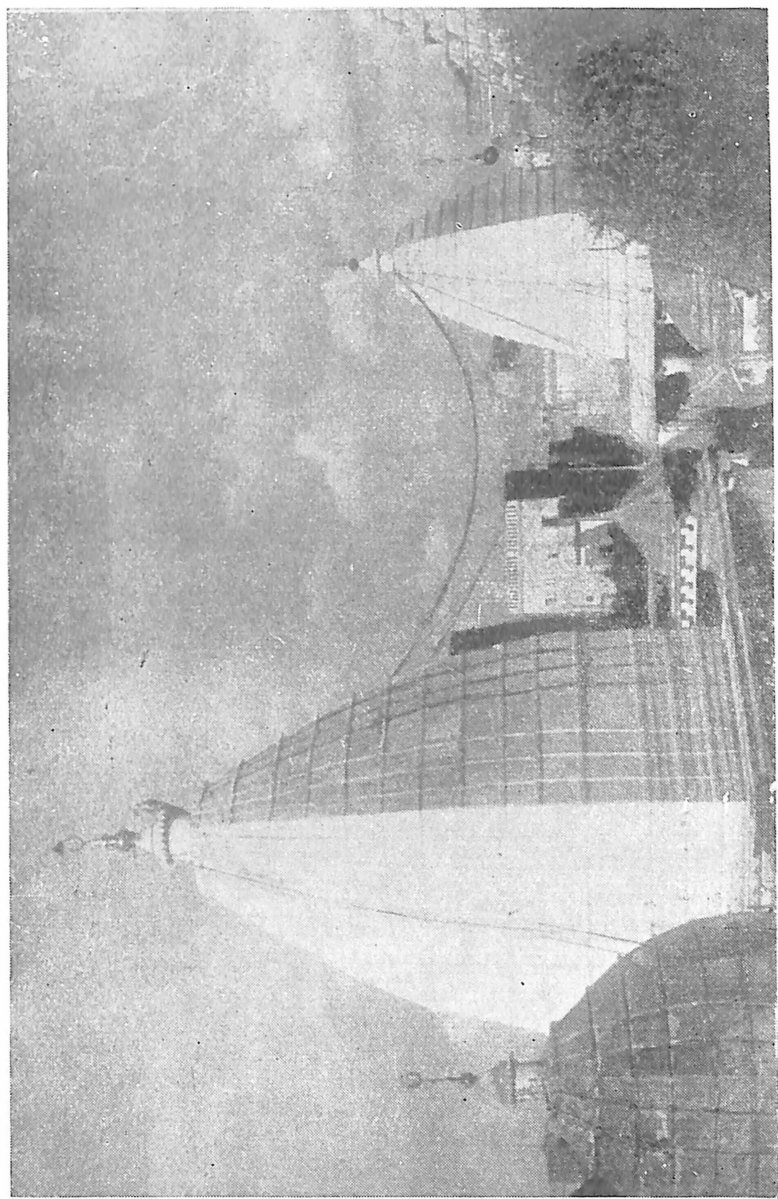


Harmandir Temple—Inside View

Plate 10



Harmandir—Shri Takht



Deoghar Temple—General View

Plate 12



Mahabodhi Temple—General View

1. PHULHER

The Girija temple at Phulher has a background which needs mention. The ancient Mithila, the core of which is the district of Darbhanga, has had her distinct individuality and an eclectic culture. This is the land of King Janaka, whose capital was at Janakpur about 18 miles from Jai-nagar in Darbhanga district. The land is also known as a part of Videha and that is why Sita, the daughter of Janaka, is also known as Vaidehi. Being intersected by rivers and streams, the area is also known from the ancient days as Tirabhukti, the land of the river banks, by which name she has been famous for at least the last fifteen hundred years. Surrounded on three sides by the three great rivers, the Gandak, the Ganga and the Kosi, and on the north by the Himalayas, Mithila has had the geographical advantage of seclusion where learning and culture could flourish. No wonder the people of Mithila are insular and exclusive in their attitude and have an almost childish faith in their own traditions and culture-complex.

Videha or Mithila or Tirabhukti was famous for deep scholarship. In the Epics and the Puranas, Buddhist and Jain literature we find frequent references to Mithila, which was both the capital city of the region and also the kingdom. The *Ramayana* immortalises the name of Mithila. Rama and Sita are household words throughout Hindu India.

The lore of Rama and Sita has imbued the length and breadth of Mithila. The place where Sita is supposed to have come out from the bowels of the earth is Sitamarhi.

Though now located in Muzaffarpur district, it is a part of the Mithila of yore. The cult of Sri Ramachandra and Sita, which has such a deep hold in Mithila, has taken a concrete shape in numerous temples throughout the area. A large fair celebrating the *Ramanavami*, i.e., the day of Rama's birth, is held at Sitamarhi, which lasts for a fortnight and is attended by about a lakh of people. Sitamarhi has a tank known as Janaki Kund from where Sita is said to have arisen. There is a modern temple of Janaki at Sitamarhi. Apparently a very old site, it was covered up with jungle in course of time. It is said that about five hundred years ago a Hindu ascetic Birbal Das came to know about the site because of his devotion and intuition. He came down from Ayodhya and cleared the jungle. He found the images of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana and built a temple over them. Janakpur, which is at a distance of 18 miles from Jainagar and 24 miles from Sitamarhi, has a number of big temples with images of Rama, Sita, Janaka etc.

There is a hoary tradition behind this region. The Aryans had migrated into Mithila from across the Sadanira, which has been identified as the Gandak river flowing into the Ganga near Hajipur. The river Sadanira is taken to have formed the boundary between the ancient Aryan kingdoms of Kosala and Videha. This tradition suggests the infiltration of the Aryans to the east of the Gandak and of the colonisation of Mithila Desha. Up to the time of the Buddha, Videha was the name of the region and later it also came to mean the distinctive family name of all the kings of Mithila, known as Janaka. History points to a large number of King Janakas in this area. It appears that Janaka was not the proper name of any particular king, but, like Videha, it was the family name by which every king of that family was known. Mithila

had become famous under one of the King Janakas and the Brahman sage Yajnavalkya. The Puranas recite the story of Yajnavalkya, his guru Vaisampayana and their great contribution as philosophers and thinkers.

But the popular mind of Hindu India does not worry about the *Adhyatma Vidya* of Yajnavalkya and King Janaka, but thinks of Mithila as the land where the sublime Sita, the idol of Indian womanhood, was born. The *Ramayana* shall remain immortal, describing the life of Rama and Sita, who was the daughter of the King of Mithila, also known as Janaka. As mentioned, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the Puranas have all immortalised Mithila.

In the later years Mithila played an important role in the history of Buddhism and Jainism. Buddha had visited Mithila thrice and Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara, was the son of a daughter of Mithila. Mahavira had frequented Vaisali and Mithila in propagating the creed of Jainism. Still later, the *Tantra Shashtra* had its grip on Mithila and the only temple of Ugratara, which is a Buddhistic deity imported from China through Tibet, is in Mahesi village, in Saharsa district, which was also a part of Mithila. Mithila's contribution to philosophy, poetry and arts has been unique but need not be dwelt on here. Vidyapati, the immortal bard, was a *Maithila* and was born at Bisafi in Darbhanga district.

Ahiari village in Darbhanga district, about two miles from Kamtaul railway station of the North Eastern Railway, has a temple of Rama and Sita. The temple commemorates the story of Ahalya, wife of the sage Gautama. It is said that when Gautama Rishi was away for a while, Lord Indra assumed the Rishi's shape and visited Ahalya. On returning, Gautama learnt from his wife of the trick played by Lord Indra. The Rishi then

cursed Ahalya, who turned into stone. She remained like that till Sri Rama's visit to the *ashram* of Gautama, while on his way to Janakpur. Rama removed the spell and Ahalya was revived. The present temple of Ahiari was built only in 1817 by Maharaja Chatra Singh Bahadur of Darbhanga. A *mela* is held there every year in the month of *Chaitra* on *Ramanavami* day. The *mela* lasts for several days and is very popular. Vishwamitra, the guru of Rama, is commemorated by a temple of Rama and Sita at Besaul, which lies about four miles from Phulher village. It is said that Besaul was the place where Vishwamitra Muni had his *ashram* and Rama and Lakshmana were his disciples at this *ashram*.

The Girija temple of Phulher, although in an inaccessible place, deserves a special mention as it has a fine legend behind it.

This temple, situated at Phulher village about 40 miles north-west of Darbhanga railway station of the North-Eastern Railway, has an ancient, sweet and ennobling halo around it. The communication to the temple is very poor. There is a metalled road from Darbhanga to Benipatti and then an unmetalled road of the District Board leads up to Hisar, which is 8 miles from Benipatti. Hisar is not accessible by any road during the rainy season. From Hisar to Phulher—a distance of 3 miles—there is merely a footpath through the fields, which is negotiable only by foot or by cycle. Another approach is through the Phulher-Harlakhi road, which passes through the north side of the temple and that also is unmetalled.

Janakpur is about 40 miles to the north of this temple. The Nepal-India border is only one mile from here. Harlakhi, which is 4 miles north, is the nearest market from here and has a post office, a block office and a police station. Passenger buses ply from Laheriasarai to

Harlakhi via Benipatti but the service does not operate in the rainy season. Visitors generally leave the buses, ekkas or rickshaws at Hisar and walk the distance to the Girija temple at Phulher village.

The legend is woven round Sri Ramachandra and Sita Devi. Sita, the daughter of King Janaka, who had his capital at Janakpur close by, used to come to Phulher village, collect sweet-smelling blossoms and offer them to the Girija deity at the temple. The tank nearby is still pointed out as the pool where Sita would have her bath, sit by and make the garlands of flower for offering to the deity.

It is here that one day Sita had repaired with her *Sakhi* (companion) and Sri Ramachandra had also gone there with Lakshmana and was plucking flowers. The bashful Sita's eyes fell on Sri Ramachandra and Sri Ramachandra too was captivated by the coy girl. Both felt a great joy in seeing each other and they hurried back to their respective abodes. This was the first meeting of Sri Ramachandra and Sita Devi and it took place in the vicinity of the Girija Devi temple. The *Balakanda* of *Ramayana* depicts this meeting in a very fascinating manner.

Vishwamitra's *ashram*, where Rama was under training, is located at Besual village, nearly four miles from Phulher village. The former village has also a temple of Sri Ramachandra and Sita Devi.

Girija temple faces the east. At the entrance, there is a verandah 10 feet by 12 feet. Then we come to the cell for the deity, measuring 8 feet by 10 feet. The height of the temple is about 75 feet. The image of the main deity of the temple, the goddess Girija, is about 2 feet high and made of black stone. To the right side of Girija is a two-feet image of Janaki, made of marble. To the left side of

Girija are the images of Ganeshji (2 feet), Kaliji (2 feet), Durgaji (2 feet), Sri Vishnu (2 feet) and Lord Shiva (2½ feet). All these images are of black stone. Excepting the Girija image, the other images were all installed later.

To the right side of the Girija temple, there is a temple of Bhairav and also a big tank. This is the tank where, according to legend, Sita took her bath daily before worshipping the goddess Girija in the adjacent temple.

The priests of the temple are Vaishnavas. This temple is claimed to be their ancestral property. About 100 people a day come here to offer prayer. Visitors generally bring sweets, fruits and garlands to offer to the deity. The priest marks the forehead of the devotees with *vibhuti* (ashes) and he usually gets money from them as *dakshina*.

The month of *Phalgun* is specially observed very religiously by the devotees of Rama and Sita. As mentioned before, there is a string of temples in the neighbourhood dedicated to Rama and Sita. In *Phalgun*, devotees undertake *Panch Kosi Yatra* and walk ten miles visiting the Rama-Sita temples at Janakpur, Ahalyasthan, Durgasthan, Kapileswarasthan, Besaul, Phulher etc. The Girija temple at Phulher draws about a thousand persons daily throughout the days of that sacred month. This is, no doubt, indicative of the deep impact of the Rama-Sita cult on the people of the locality. Rather peculiar is the fact that the devotees all worship Sita as mother although they lovingly refer to her as a daughter (*maiyyah*) and take pride in narrating about her triumphs and travails, joys and sorrows. Sri Ramachandra is fondly referred not only as the Lord and Master of the Universe but also as the son-in-law of the area.

As for the routine of the rituals, the deities are daily

bathed morning and evening and this is followed by offering *Prasad* and *Arti*.

So far as facilities for visitors are concerned, there are no *dharmashalas* or rest sheds near the temple and in the village. No one has thought of building them despite the relatively isolated nature of the locality. Visitors generally stay under the trees and in the huts of *pandas*, who charge money for affording shelter. The troubles of the pilgrims and visitors can well be imagined. It may be mentioned that a good proportion of the pilgrims is from Nepal.

This Girija temple, with its immemorial tradition of Sita meeting Rama for the first time and the subsequent marriage of all the four sons of king Dasharatha of Ayodhya to the four daughters of King Janaka, prompts us to make a few observations on the enduring impact of the Rama-Sita cult which has permeated Hindu India through Mithila.

It is said that the sage Vishwamitra took Sri Ramachandra and Lakshmana to the court of King Janaka at Janakpur where Rama broke the bow and Sita garlanded him. The *Malyadan* by Sita completed the marriage, though the father of the bridegroom was not present at the time. Later the formal invitation to King Dasharatha was sent and he came with the other sons. As Janaka and his brothers had three more daughters, they were given in marriage to the three sons of King Dasharatha. The quick way in which the marriages were settled and performed is still being perpetuated at Saurath *mela* which is probably a singular institution of its kind in the world. At village Saurath, in Darbhanga district, every year a big *mela* is held only for striking marriage bargains. The parents and guardians of boys and girls attend this congregation with horoscopes and pundits, on examining the same,

give their opinion as to the suitability of the marriages contemplated between the parties concerned. Immediately on hearing their opinion, it is quite common for the boy's father, along with a few friends, to rush to the girl's place and the wedding will duly take place.

The lines of the *Balakanda*, dwelling on the touching farewell given by King Janaka to the bridegroom's party, evoke before us a scene full of pathos. Many are the songs that have been composed over this sad parting, which are still recited, along with passages from Tulsidas' *Ramayana*, when a bride now leaves her parent's home. Several of the songs that are recited by the ladies of Mithila now are woven round the lines in the *Ramayana* describing Sita's marriage. The courtesy and the hospitality extended by Raja Janaka to Rama and Dasharatha have become a tradition and example which are still followed throughout Hindu India as far as the means permit. Sita was married in the month of *Agrahayan* and as Sita had her fill of grief and distress all through her life, marriages in the month of *Agrahayan* are not normally encouraged.

Quotations from Tulsidas's *Ramayana* are very common on the lips of the older generation. There are thousands of Hindus in Mithila who still recite a few couplets of the *Ramayana* before and after taking their two principal meals. Portions of the *Ramayana* are read daily in a large number of homes. Not only do Hindus utter the name of Rama when in trouble, but it is also common among them to utter the sacred *Rama Nama* into the ears of the dying man.

All over Hindu India, during the occasion of the *Durga Puja*, *Rama Lila* parties have become pretty common. *Rama Lila* performances always attract thousands of people, who love to see the story of the *Ramayana* visualised before their eyes. Some of the *Rama*

Lila parties have become well-known and are eagerly sought after to partake in the *Vijayadashami* celebrations. The boys playing the part of Rama and Sita are held in high esteem and the sanctity of tradition is so alive that hundreds of the elderly folk even bow down before the actors. Garlands, sweetmeat (*prasad*) and coins are showered on them as a mark of respect.

2. MA PAUDI

Worship of a deity without a devotional *darshan* is rather rare in India. The deity of Sri Sri Ma Paudi, enshrined at Porahat first and then at Seraikella in Bihar, is a deity of that category. Seraikella was the headquarters of a feudatory State and now it is the headquarters of the Seraikella Sub-division of Singhbhum district. Nobody is permitted to see Ma Paudi except the Ruler, the Heir Apparent, the Heir Presumptive and their consorts and the main *Dehuri* or *Pujari* (priest) of the temple. Formerly everyone could have *darshan* but, since the beginning of the 19th century, a decision was taken in a convention of the people of Seraikella that none except those mentioned above would be allowed to have *darshan* of the deity on ordinary days. The members of the Ruler's family, the Singha Dynasty, could now have the *darshan* of Ma Paudi only on the *Nuakhia* and *Jesht Jantal* days. The taboo still continues even after the termination of the rulership. The story of how the taboo came into vogue is indicated later.

This unseen deity that has acquired a mysterious halo round her, was the bone of contention between two ruling Houses, that of the Maharaja of Singhbhum (Porahat) and of the Raja of Seraikella. The deity first found her way to Porahat and then to Seraikella. When the British wanted to draw up a treaty with Raja Ghanesyam Singh of Singhbhum, the latter insisted, among other terms, on the restoration of Sri Paudi or Pauri Devi from the possession of the Raja of Seraikella. From the very beginning of the parleys, Capt. Roughsedge was insisting on the restoration of Sri

Pauri Devi and Raja Bikram Singh of Seraikella was adamantly refusing to part with the deity. The British supremacy was acknowledged by the Maharaja of Singhbhum (Porahat) in 1820, while the Ruler of Seraikella conceded it in 1823. Ma Paudi continued to remain with Seraikella.

Ishta Devatas or presiding deities for families are quite well known. So also are *Ishta Devatas* for many of the erst-while ruling houses in India. A presiding deity for a particular part of the country is also not unknown. Pauri Devi or Paudi Devi or Ma Paudi is the presiding deity of the Singhbhum district in Chotanagpur, a division of the State of Bihar. According to the *Vamsa Prava Lekhana*, Paudi Devi originally came from Ceylon. *Vamsa Prava Lekhana* is a chronicle which has been faithfully recorded in palm leaves by a family of Dogras, who have followed the Simha Dynasty of Rathors from Rameswaram to Singhbhum, Kanjo, Rajputana and back to Singbhum through all the vicissitudes of history and have recorded the chief events in each reign from generation to generation. The present palm leaf manuscript was copied out from the original in the year 1700 of the Samvat (1643 A.D.), during the reign of Kashiram Singh II, the 41st king of the Singh dynasty. It was copied by Maguni Rout Dogra, son of Chitra Rout, and the dates of events are given in the *Vikram Samvat* or the Gajapati Era. The language and the script are in Oriya. According to this important chronicle, when the Simhas were installed by Lord Sri Ramachandra to keep guard over Rameswaram, this deity (Ma Paudi) appeared before them in a dream saying that she had come to sustain them in their efforts to keep watch over the 14,000 Hara lingas. The king noted that the idol was made of *Ashtadhatu* or eight different metals, besides the Siva Linga in *Setu-bandha* Rameswaram. The deity is seated on a *dambaru* and

is *Tri-Nayana*. The sword, the *gada*, the *munda*, and the *kharpāra* adorn her four hands. The lion stands beside her.*

The *Vamsa Prabha Lekhana* has given some alternative names of Paudi Devi. Some of them are Mandaleswari, Hingulakshi and Ali. The *Vamsa Prabha* relates that the Devi, who was in Rameswaram, decided to come over to Simhabhumi (Singhbhum). In a playful mood, in the garb of a girl she came over there via Keonjhar, Bonai and Jamda and this tract is called Paudi country. There is actually a sect of Bhuiyas in this area known as Paudi Bhuiyas. At village Kointala the deity appeared in a dream before the two brothers Khira and Nira by name and bade them to take her over to Simhabhumi and tell the Raja there to provide her with food. Khira followed the indication and found the idol in a basket under some creepers. He brought the image to Venugarh and, leaving her under a tree, went and narrated the whole story before the king. But when they came back they found that she had disappeared. However, she was traced into the river Sanjai, thanks to a dream to Khira that the Paudi Bhuiyas had concealed her in the waters of the river Sanjai. The idol was recovered and, under the clearing of a bamboo tree, the first *puja* and sacrifice were performed, as it used to be done in Rameswaram. This place is called Banskata and the village is near Porahat. On the fourth day of the bright half of *Jeshtha*, the deity was installed in the temple at Porahat. This took place during

* "Samuti Damburasanam Katyachitra Vaghambhari
Sri Karancha Gada-Khadga Kharparam Munda Vamaya."

समुति डम्बुरासनं कट्याचित् बाघाम्बरी ।

श्री कराँचा गदाखड्गा खर्परम् वामाय् ॥

[*Samuti* is the *apabhramsa* of *Sambhuti* i.e. Who manifests Herself].

the reign of King Achutya Singh I, the fourth in the dynasty, in the ninth year of the Gajapati Era.*

Installed at Porahat, Paudi Devi or Ma Paudi became quickly the presiding deity of the area. Bonai and Keonjhar, two adjoining feudatory States of Orissa, soon came to be known as Paudia Bhuiya. The main festival in Sri Paudi Devi's temple, followed ever since, right up to the present day, is the *Sohala Puja* or a *puja* performed with much ceremony continuously for sixteen days, beginning from Jitua or Jimutavahana *Ashtami*, in *Bhadra*, up to the *Mahashtami* preceding the great *Dusarah* festival in *Aswin*. *Sohala Puja* is also performed in Sri Vimala Devi's temple at Puri and in Sri Biraja Devi's temple at Jajpur in Orissa.

It has been observed** : "Since Ma Paudi came to Singhbhum, during the reign of Maharaja Kashiram Singh, she has not only been installed in the temple at Porahat and later on in the temple at Seraikella, but she has also been installed in the hearts of every citizen of Simhabhumi (the real old inhabitants). Throughout the whole of Simhabhumi, Seraikella and Kharswan there are *Paudi-sthans* scattered over here and there. Ma Paudi has been the symbol of unity. In the Calcutta University publication of 1931 in the 'Anthropological Papers—New Series No. 2' by Tarakechandra Das, M.A., in 'The Bhumijs of Seraikella', the author writes at page 39, 'Paori, a female deity, is annually worshipped once in the month of *Jeshtha* (May-June) and again in *Ashadh* (June-July) on any two days fixed by the villagers according to their convenience. At every worship a clay image

* *Singhbhum, Seraikella and Kharswan Through the Ages* by Tikayet N. N. Singh Deo.

** *Singhbhum, Seraikella and Kharswan Through the Ages* by Tikayet N. N. Singh Deo, (pp. 22-23).

of a horse and another of elephant, in miniature form, are commonly purchased from the potters and placed on the spot of worship and form interesting offerings.' "

This is a description of the worship of Paori as held in ordinary villages. But there are in addition to these, two important centres where the rite takes place with much more eclat. At Pauri Mel, near the town of Seraikella, the Goddess Paori is worshipped. Here once a year, on a particular day all the lease-holders of the State, whether Hindus or not, assemble with sacrificial animals and rice which they offer to the Goddess and partake of it at the place. At Aharbandh, at Karaikella, there is a large circular stone known as Paori, where, once a year, the tenants and lease-holders assemble and sacrifice animals which are eaten on the spot.

The above is a description of the ceremony festival of *Nabanna Bhajan* or the *Nua-khia Jantal*, as it is locally called, when, on a fixed date after the *Sukla Chaturthi* of the month of *Bhadra* each year, the product of the new harvest is offered first to Ma Paudi at Pauri Mel near Seraikella. None in the whole of Singhbhum will take new rice before it is thus offered to the Goddess. This is very strictly followed by all castes and creeds, including the tribes among the old inhabitants of Seraikella, Kharswan and Singhbhum. The *Nua-khia Jantal* at Seraikella is followed by similar *jantals* in other *Paudi-sthans* throughout Seraikella, Singhbhum, which is sometimes described as *Paudi-Mati* or the land of Ma Paudi. These ceremonies go to promote the cultural unity of the lands of Sri Paudi.

Besides the festival described above, there is another *jantal* on the *Jeshtha Sukla Chaturthi*—the day Sri Paudi Devi was installed at Porahat during the reign of Achutya Singh I in the 13th century A.D. and similarly installed at Seraikella much later, known as the birthday of Ma

Paudi. Now this *jantal* is performed in Seraikella when all tenants and lease-holders bring their sacrifices to the Sri Paudi temple. This is followed by similar *jantals* in other *Paudi-sthans*, some of which only may be enumerated as being in Karaikella, Karnagiri Guda, Gamharia, Ujanpur-Ganjia, Tumung, Dumurdiha, Joddhiha, Sampra, Burdihi, Dumra, Gahira, Tentoposi, Banskata, Porahat, Kharswan and various other places.

The above are the routine annual festivities in the name and honour of Sri Paudi. Once in every ten years there is a national gathering at Paudi-Mel, just outside Seraikella Town, in the Singhbhum Pir of Seraikella State. People from all areas, far and near, assemble in their thousands and offer sacrifices at the altar of Ma Paudi. It is the greatest national festival of the land—a sort of miniature Kumbha Mela—and is also known by the name of *Dasandi* or Decidennial, *Jantal* or *Paudi-Mel*, which literally means national unity in the name of Ma Paudi. When the *jantal* is over, people are not supposed to go out of the prescribed area formed by two streamlets and the river Kharkai, but must cook their food within that space. It is a glorious sight to see little fires springing up here, there and everywhere to dispel the darkness of a *Bhado* night. After the food is cooked, the congregation must eat it there, too, and one is not allowed to take even a morsel of food outside the specified area. Every ten years people must meet and mingle, worship the common goddess and feel that each and every one of them is of the same nationality and culture. There is no distinction of caste or creed here. A Ho or a Munda, a Santal, a Bhumij, a Brahmin, a Karan, a Kshatriya, a Bhuiya, a Mahato, a Ghasi, a Dom, a Bhandari, a Tell, an Oriya or one speaking the tribal dialect, must all unite together in the name of God and feel that they are Seraikellian

Singhbhuiyas first and tribes, races or castes, afterwards, and all must sing to the glory of Sri Paudi Devi—JAY MA PAUDI.

The legend of Ma Paudi is intimately associated with the kings of the Simha Dynasty of Seraikella. The Simha-bhumi kingdom was founded by Darpa Narayan Singh, on the 12th *Phalgun* of the year 1262 of the Vira Vikramaditya Era, corresponding to 1205 A.D. The Porahat fort was set up in 1272 and this year also marked the advent of Sri Paudi Devi to Singhbhum. Raja Achutya Singh installed Sri Paudi Devi at Porahat. The Bhuiyas were the backbone of the Simha Rajas and Ma Paudi was the symbol of unity of the Bhuiyas with the Simha Rajas. Even later on, when the Bhuiyas had risen in revolt against some of the later Rajas, the prestige of Paudi Ma remained undiminished. In 1581 A.D. Ranjit Singh had ascended the *gaddi*. There was a severe uprising against Ranjit Singh, and the Kols, Saraks, Rautias and Kat Bhuiyas combined in rebellion and burnt all the palaces at Jaipur, Jagannathpur and Porahat. The ladies of the royal family had to be removed to Nagpur. Raja Ranjit Singh had to hide the images of Ma Paudi Devi and Sri Raghunath Mahaprabhu in the Sanjai river and flee to Jodhpur and then to Delhi to meet Akbar. The very idea of Paudi Devi being left to herself was a sacrifice to the Simha Raja Ranjit Singh. He was fortunate to secure the friendship of Raja Man Singh and accompanied him on his way back to Orissa. Man Singh conferred the title of Maharaja on Raja Ramchandra of Khorda and the latter counselled Ranjit Singh to go back to Singhbhum. Accordingly, Ranjit Singh returned to Singhbhum in 1590 A.D. and re-established himself. The idol of Ma Paudi was brought out from the place of concealment and was

installed again with great pomp. But once more the image had to be removed to Panasua village, when another revolt, this time against Raja Kashiram Singh II, occurred in 1641. The Raja again mustered support from Purushottama Deva Gajapati of Khorda and with his help came back and rebuilt Porahat. Paudi Devi was duly reinstated. There are stories as to how the clue to the hiding place of Ma paudi used to be written in a bamboo stick and was carried along for future identification.

Now we come to the story as to how Ma Paudi, the presiding deity of Singhbhum as well as the family deity of the rulers of Singhbhum, came to have the taboo that radically restricted the *darshan* of the deity, as indicated earlier. It came about this way. Ma Paudi was being worshipped with great veneration; but in the latter half of the 17th and the early part of the 18th centuries, the Maharajas of Porahat began to patronise a form of Buddhism which was popularly known in that part of the country as *Bakali Dharma**, and this led to a decline in the prestige as well as *pūja* of Ma Paudi. The public worship was neglected and even the image was thrown away. It is devoutly believed that, owing to this neglect of Ma Paudi, the power and fame of the Maharaja of Singhbhum, with Porahat as the capital, dwindled. This was the period when the kingdom was reduced in size and from 14,000 component villages the number came down to a mere 500. This is what the British found when they first came in contact with Singhbhum.

The story goes that an old woman brought the image of Ma Paudi to Seraikella for selling it. The then *Dewan* of Seraikella purchased the image as a toy for his daughter. That very night both Maharaja Abhiram Singh

* This creed is also known as *Alekha Dharm* in Orissa.

of Seraikella and his *Dewan* Narahari had an identical dream. Ma Paudi appeared before them and commanded that she should be installed in a temple inside the palace. She was brought to the palace on the *Jeshtha Sukla Chaturthi* and installed. This day is celebrated as her birthday and there is a special *jantal* (congregation and worship). There is another version of the *Jeshtha jantal*, which is also known as *dhulia jantal*. It is said that Maharaja Abhiram Singh was on a pilgrimage to Ganga Sagar and his ship was wrecked. He offered prayers to Ma Paudi in all humility and was saved. Immediately on his return to Seraikella and even without washing his feet (*dhulia* means dusty) he performed the *jantal puja* of Sri Ma Paudi. It is a historical fact that, since the installation of Ma Paudi at Seraikella, the power and prestige of Seraikella Raj went on increasing. This caused a good deal of jealousy in the minds of the Maharajas of Porahat where Ma Paudi had been installed before. Jagannath Singh, one of the Maharajas of Porahat, was without any son. He had adopted a son of Abhiram Singh, the Raja of Seraikella. The adopted boy had intimate knowledge of the secret places of Seraikella palace. The boy was sent by Raja Jagannath Singh to Seraikella palace to steal away the image of Sri Sri Ma Paudi and, if need be, even to kill his own natural father for the purpose. The boy was, however, caught red-handed and the conspiracy was nipped in the bud.* There was another attempt to get the image of Ma Paudi through the good offices of the British, when the Maharaja entered into treaty relationship with them in 1820. But this attempt was also foiled. So there

* The magnanimous father excused his erring son and sent him back to Porahat. The boy, however, pre-deceased his adoptive father and, therefore, never occupied the *gaddi* of Porahat. Jagannath Singh subsequently adopted a distant nephew.

was a keen competition between the Rajas of Porahat and Seraikella for the possession of the image of Ma Paudi.

Ever since that day, when the attempt to commit the theft of Sri Sri Ma Paudi by the adopted son of the Porahat Maharaja was detected, the public has been severely restricted from having the *darshan* of the deity. This momentous decision was not arbitrarily taken by the Ruler. In a large convention of the people of Seraikella, the Sardars, family members of the ruling house and the Ruler, it was decided that Ma Paudi should remain mostly unseen and, by virtue of her unique sanctity, it was fondly believed that the Mother, though unseen, will go on blessing her children. Since then Ma Paudi has remained more or less a mystery. Taking of photos of the image is still a taboo. Ma Paudi continues to exercise a remarkable spell on the entire Porahat and Seraikella area as well as in other regions, and particularly on the thousands of Santals, Kurmis, Bhuiyas, Bhumis and Hos. Pauri Devi is the mother to all the indigenous population of Singhbhum. The passage of time and the vicissitudes of fortune have taken away the crown from the Rajas of Porahat and Seraikella, but the members of the former ruling families and the common folk are now united in their common bond of veneration and worship of Ma Paudi.

It may be noted here that the remarkable spell exercised by Ma Paudi on the rulers and ruled alike is amply demonstrated in the manner in which the Maharaja of Singhbhum tried to gain possession of the image with the help of the British in 1820. It is a historical fact that, after the Mahratta War, the policy of the Company's Government towards the independent Indian States underwent considerable change, and consequently, there was a desire to establish some kind of treaty relationship with

the Indian States. In pursuance of this policy, known as the Subsidiary Alliance, the British approached the Maharaja of Singhbhum in 1820 for a treaty. This was done despite the fact that the influence of the Porahat *Raj* had waned very considerably and the kingdom had shrunk from 14,000 villages to a bare 500. Lord Wellesley had realised that the Ruler of Seraikella counted for much more than the Ruler of Singhbhum and he had asked Seraikella not to allow any passage of Raghuji Bhonsle's troops through his territory and the British had also received active assistance from the Raja of Seraikella during the third Mahratta War. But there was now a shift and a new-found desire to patronise Singhbhum or the Maharaja of Porahat. The Ruler of Porahat promptly responded to the overtures of the British and one of the terms was that the image of Paudi Devi, which was in the possession of the Raja of Seraikella, should be restored. On the 8th of March, 1923, Col. Gilbert, with the Ramgarh Battalion and accompanied by Raja Ghana-shyam Singh of Porahat, marched on and surrounded the palace of Seraikella to bring back the image of Sri Paudi Devi. Raja Bikram Singh of Seraikella had a couple of spurious images of Ma Paudi secretly prepared and it was these fake images that were made over to the Raja of Porahat. It is said that the Rani of Bikram Singh was waiting on the brink of a large octagonal well, with the real image of Ma Paudi tied to her neck, ready to leap into the well for self-immolation if the fraud was detected.

The secret could not, however, remain a secret for long. After a while the Maharaja of Porahat came to know that he had been duped and he threw away the image he had taken on the banks of the river Sanjai. This image was picked up and installed at the house of the

Zamindar of Icha, a scion of the Seraikella family. The image is still there. The *darshan* of this image is unrestricted. The renewed protests and requests of the Porahat *Raj* to the British Government for restoring the real image were said to have been turned down by the later British administrators.

A number of mysterious stories woven round Ma Paudi are current today. One of them is that Seraikella *Raj* always used to keep apart a white horse specially earmarked for Ma Paudi. No one would ride the horse. Well harnessed with gold and silver tassels, it led royal processions on occasions like *Dusserah*, *Sunia* and the *Makar* festivals. It was also taken out in procession, with music, on *Ashwa Panchami* Day. It is said that the groom would find the horse in the morning foaming and frothing as if ridden in the night. It was commonly believed that Ma Paudi used to go on horseback, occasionally, to another shrine of her at Jhumakeswari, about two miles away from Seraikella town. Many would aver that they had heard the sound of horse-hoof on the road leading to Jhumakeswari. In recent years, after the merger of the States, an Adivasi police guard at the sub-divisional sub-treasury of Seraikella near the Palace gate, has stated that he saw somebody coming out from the Palace gate riding on a horse, at the dead of night, though the gate was shut.

Many living persons vouchsafe that, after the death of Ma Paudi's white horse about 20 years back, a white pony at Icha—a village some distance away—would run straight to the local *Paudisthan* whenever it was set loose. The owner of the pony had a dream that he should offer his pony to Sri Ma Paudi as she was without one. On an auspicious day he led the horse to Seraikella and at the outskirts of Seraikella the horse broke away and ran straight to Ma Paudi's temple and then to the stable. But that pony

has also died and for the last five or six years Ma Paudi is without a pony. Another popular story is about the visit of tigers to the temple. It is quite possible that, when the outskirts of Seraikella were full of jungle in the last century, tigers might have been attracted to the carcasses of the sacrificial goats and buffaloes. A few years back a Bihari treasury guard claimed that he had seen a tiger on *Jeth jantal* night at the gate of the Palace.

Many persons are supposed to have seen supernatural occurrences like the sudden flaring up of the bright light at the top of the temple pinnacle, which has the *Chakra* and *Dhwaja*. Such occurrences have taken place whenever there were great calamities or during occasions of great joy. There are still many people who remember that there was a very bright glow when the great flood of 1927 had threatened Seraikella town. On 27th July, 1927, the river Kharkai rose unprecedentedly and half of the town was washed away and the other half, including the Palace, Court and the Kutchery, was in imminent danger. The glow brightened as the danger heightened and it faded away as soon as the peril passed off in a couple of hours.

Ma Paudi has also been a source of inspiration to a number of literary men of that area. Folk stories and folk songs have grown out of the abiding faith in Ma Paudi.

The liquidation of Seraikella as a Feudatory State has posed a problem so far as the temple of Ma Paudi is concerned. The temple was located inside the Palace of the *Raj* and no *Devattar* property had been specially allotted for the maintenance of the temple. As already explained, Ma Paudi* is venerated throughout the area and worshipped by all. After the State's merger, the burden of upkeep of the temple has fallen wholly on the private purse of the ex-

* It may be mentioned that the word *Ma Paudi* is derived from *Parvati*, which is a phase or a manifestation of *Chandi*.

Ruler of Seraikella. The restrictions on the *darshan*, described earlier, still remain, but the maintenance now has become a problem. It is understood that the ex-Ruler has made a suggestion to the Government that the image of Ma Paudi may be installed in a temple meant for the public and that he be fully exonerated from the cost of maintenance in consideration of his present reduced means.

3. BENUSAGAR

For an example of a temple-town, once in all her glory and playing an important role in history and now in ruins, there could be no better instance in Bihar than Benusagar, a village in Singhbhum district. Benusagar, now a hamlet with age-old relics, jungles, bushes and snakes, is situated seven miles south from Majgaon by road, in the extreme south-west of the Kolhan area and on the border of Singhbhum district in Bihar and Mayurbhanj district in Orissa. The village takes its name after a large tank to the north of the village. The tank is evidently ancient and is now silted up with weeds. There is a small island in the middle of the tank, which is covered with shrub and jungle; but it is this island which once had a number of temples and throbbed with life and pilgrims. There are a number of low mounds of brick marking the ruins of several old temples and a number of beautifully sculptured images lying half buried in the ground. According to local tradition, the tank was excavated and a fort was built round the township by Raja Benu, son of Raja Keshna of Keshnagarh.

The ruins with ancient relics had attracted the attention of Col. Tickell, one of the earliest British administrators of Singhbhum district. He visited the place in 1840 and has left the following account of the place:

“In Aula pir, to the far south, a few Kols* of the poorest kind have built a wretched, straggling hamlet near the banks of what once was a truly magnificent tank. It is called Benusagar, and is said to have been built by one

* An aboriginal tribe indigenous to Singhbhum district.

Raja Benu, who fled from the place owing to the incursions of the Mahrattas. This was probably during the days of the celebrated Murari Rao; for judging by the trees which now luxuriate amidst the buildings, the place must have been deserted and in ruins full 200 years ago. The tank, which I placed as well as the jungle allowed me, is about 600 yards square. On the east bank are the remains of a handsome stone *ghat*; the west side may be similar, but was inaccessible by reason of thickets. On the summit of the ample *bandh* or embankment, surrounding the water, lie stones richly carved; it is probable that they once constituted small temples ranged around. In the centre of the tank is an island crowned by a temple, now almost a shapeless mass. On the south-east corner of the tank are the debris of a *garhi* or small fort, which appears to have been a parallelogram of about 300 by 150 yards, enclosed by a massy wall with towers at the corners. In the centre are two sunken platforms, with stone steps descending into them, in which lie idols in all stages of decay; some of these were buried many feet under a loose reddish soil having the appearance of decayed bark. Three of the best preserved of these I took away, with the help of some Nagpur Dhangars, not one of the people of the country daring to touch them. About 300 yards to the south of the *garhi* is another mound of hillock of broken bricks, which I was told was the office of the Raja. To the west of this, and all along the bank of the tank, the plain now covered with jungle-grass, and here and there cultivated with *gora dhan* or highland rice by the Kols, is scattered with bricks, showing that a substantial town or bazar must have existed here."

Tickell was not an archaeologist nor an iconographer. The Archaeological Department had deputed Mr. Beglar who, after a close inspection, ascribed the origin of the

temples to the Seventh century A.D. A part of his observations may be quoted : "The sculptures that exist are entirely Brahmanical with two exceptions. The exceptions are a small naked figure which, from its evident resemblance to Jaina figures, I take to be Jaina; and a seated figure, with the hands in the attitude of teaching, resembling figures of Buddha and, like many of them, with his head covered by little curls. That this figure is Buddhist, its general resemblance to figures of Buddha in Magadh lead me to believe; still there is nothing impossible in its being Jaina. With these two exceptions, all the figures are Brahmanical and almost exclusively Saivic, Ganesh, Kali, Mahisasuri Devi etc., fragments of these being frequent. A remarkable piece of sculpture, of curious and excellent execution and very spirited design, represents the forepart of an elephant elaborately ornamented. The elephant is kneeling, and evidently formed either a pedestal of a figure or projected from the plinth near the entrance of some one of the numerous temples, in a manner similar to the projecting figures of elephants in other parts of India. The excellence of execution and design of this piece of sculpture entitles it to a place in any museum."*

It is extremely unfortunate that, since Beglar wrote, there has been a further deterioration of the sculpture and many of the images are said to have disappeared.

Benusagar and its surrounding area had once evidently played a very great role in the history of Jainism, Buddhism and Brahmanism. The low mounds of bricks found at Benusagar are obviously *stupas* so well-known in Jain and Buddhistic shrines. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that there are a large number of *stupas* in the neighbouring villages of Keshnagarh, Ruam and Itapukri. These various places had or still have a number of ancient relics.

* Quoted in the *District Gazetteer of Singhbhum* (1958).

Ruam has some old remains of a moat, tanks and an accumulation of ancient copper slag and all these indicate a township at one time. About Ruam, L.S.S. O'Malley, the author of the old Singhbhum district gazetteer mentions: "It contains some remains which probably mark a former settlement of the *Sravakas* or lay Jains, though local tradition ascribes them to a Rajah called Ruam who is said to have a fort here."* O'Malley is probably not wrong, as Jainism had struck deep roots in Singhbhum along with Manbhum (now Purulia district). Singhbhum borders Kalinga (Orissa). There was active trade and commerce and a constant passage of pilgrims between Kalinga and these areas and the road to Kalinga passed through this region. Singhbhum was also included in the empire of Kharavela, the great Jain Emperor of Orissa. Mahavira Vardhamana, the 24th *Tirthankara* of Jainism, had passed through this area, visiting places in Manbhum and Singhbhum district and then going to Orissa. Mahavira went to Kalinga as the king of Kalinga was a friend of his father. An old Jain work, the *Haribhadriya-Virtti*, mentions this. The Emperor Kharavela's famous Hathigumpha inscription has a reference to Gorathagiri (Barabar hills in Gaya), Rajagriha (Rajgir in Patna), and the Gangetic plains of Pataliputra. The route from Kalinga to Magadha, where Gorathagiri, Rajagriha, and Pataliputra were situated, ran through the Singhbhum district. Singhbhum has been referred to in the Jaina treatise of *Achranga-Sutra*, along with references to the neighbouring areas known as Vajjabhumi. Jainism had spread from Bihar to Kalinga through Singhbhum and it is not surprising as we find relics of Jainism scattered in Manbhum and Singhbhum districts. Emperor Asoka was a great patron of Bud-

* *District Gazetteer of Singhbhum*, 1907, quoted in the *District Gazetteer* published in 1958.

dhism but he was not unsympathetic or bigoted towards Jainism. It can be readily said that during his time there was no active interference with Jaina *Munis* or Jaina temples.

Some of the periods of history relating to the area where Benusagar is located are shrouded in the dark. It is, however, well-known that in the Seventh century A.D. of the Christian era, one Sasanka ruled over this territory. A seal of Sasanka has been found engraved on the hill of Rohtasgarh. Two copper plate records of Sasanka's reign, found at Midnapore, establish that this area too was under his control. Ganjam plates of Madhavaraja II, dated 619-20 A.D., mention him as *Maharajadhiraja*, that is, the suzerain lord of Ganjam. From all these data it would be safe to assume that Sasanka had his rule extended from Rohtasgarh to Ganjam in the early half of the Seventh century A.D. and that Singhbhum must have been included within his empire. There is a tradition at Kichang, six miles away from Benusagar in the Keonjhar district of Orissa, that the temples of Benusagar were built by the king named Sasanka. This Sasanka lost his realm to the combined attack of Harsha and his ally Bhaskaravarman of Kamarupa.

Most of the antiquities at Benusagar could be said to belong to the Pala period. The Bhanjas of Orissa, who split into several branches, also used to assume independence over some principalities or other whenever any chance occurred. At one time they ruled over a very extensive area in Kalinga (Orissa) and the border tracts of Bengal and Bihar. It is possible that some time or other some of the Bhanja kings had also controlled or ruled Singhbhum district. This is indicated by the similarity in the sculpture of the antiquities found in several villages of Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and other districts in Orissa and this part of Bihar as in the case of the Benusagar relics. Benusagar

must also have had the impact of the invasion of Rajendra Chola the Great, in the 10th century A.D. of the Christian era. Rajendra Chola invaded Orissa and lower Bengal and presumably must have gone through Singhbhum district and the neighbouring districts of Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar, which were once feudatory states.

Later, Mahipala I of the Pala dynasty established the second Pala empire in which this area, too, was included. Regarding this the revised District Gazetteer of Singhbhum mentions:

“This is confirmed by the mention of the various feudatories who helped Ramapala, a descendant of Mahipala I, in crushing the Kaivartta rebellion in Bengal; and in establishing the third Pala empire. The *Ramacharita* of Sandhyakaranandi gives a list of loyal feudatory princes; and amongst these, is mentioned Lakshmisur of Aparamandara, who is described as the head of the group of feudatory chiefs of all the forest countries; and whose territory was in the neighbourhood of that of Surapala, ruler of Kujabati, which is about 14 miles north of Naya Dumka in the Santal Parganas and Rudra-Sikhara, ruler of Tailakampa (Telkupi in the Manbhum district). All these show that Lakshmisur headed all the Mankis in the forest tract. He was possibly the medieval chief Manki, a caste which was prevalent in the Chotanagpur division during the advent of the British rule in Bihar. It is also possible that his territories included Singhbhum.”*

The medieval remains at Benusagar and, as a matter of fact, the remains throughout Singhbhum district, have witnessed a chequered history through the ages. Notwithstanding the remote location of Benusagar in an area inhabited by the aboriginal tribes, both Tickell and Beglar

* *District Gazetteer of Singhbhum* (1958) by P. C. Roy Choudhury.

had done well in visiting the places. Beglar had visited it twice in 1840 and 1875. The place has since been declared protected under the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act (Act VIII) of 1904.

Now a number of archaeological remains have been collected in a particular spot known as *Devasthan* on the eastern embankment of Benusagar. *Devasthan* is of recent origin. It consists of a low enclosure constructed with *dissecta* from ruined temples and thatched houses. In this enclosed area, and in its proximity, quite a number of stone images have been kept. Some of them are complete and the others are damaged. There are eight phallic emblems of Siva and the foundations of four temples, with their remains scattered round them. The building materials were bricks and two kinds of stones: chlorite and laterite.

The *devasthan* occupies the main temple site of the place, where the collected *dissecta membra* testify to the existence of at least four structures, excluding those which still lie buried under the ground. There are small brick mounds to the north and the south of this *devasthan*; these mounds probably mark the sites of ancient temples. The present dak bungalow standing on the southern side of the tank has also been erected on the site of a temple. Ample evidence, therefore, exists to conclude that the area round about the tank possesses ruins of several temples, of which none is surviving to our time, though signs of iconoclastic vandalism are absent. In the absence of large-scale excavations, the exact number of the structures cannot now be determined. There are eight phallic symbols of Mahadeva which suggest the existence of eight separate temples. The other miscellaneous images found in the *devasthan* area were either decorative elements of the fanes or those originally enshrined in the side niches of the temples.

The *Revised District Gazetteer of Singhbhum* mentioned:

“The available evidence, therefore, makes it quite clear that Benusagar was a place of worship for the Saivas, possibly a place of Ashta-Sambhu. That the number of Sambhus might have been increased infinitely in later times is also probable. In medieval eastern India, a practice had grown up to establish places of worship, with eight phallic emblems of Siva-Mahadeva; and several places shared this feature with Benusagar. These are Bhubaneshwar in Orissa, Kiching in the Mayurbhanj district, a place only five miles to the south of Benusagar, Khekparta near Lohardaga in the district of Ranchi. Since none of the temples have survived, it is difficult to opine about the style of temple architecture that was prevalent at Benusagar; but, the examples of such places as Kiching and Ranipur-Jural possibly indicate that they followed the Nagara style of temples. Hypothetically, we may be permitted to assume that the temples at Benusagar belong to the distant epochs. The first between 8th or 9th century A.D., when the Palas under Dharmapala and Devapala established the Pala empire from Kanauj up to the sea coast; and the second from 10th or 11th century A.D., when the second Pala empire was established by Mahipala I. According to tradition, the tank of Benusagar was excavated by Raja Benu, son of Raja Keshna of Keshnagarh. Keshnagarh with the ruins of a fort was visited by Mr. Beglar but no object of special interest is reported to have been found by him.”*

* *District Gazetteer of Singhbhum* (1958) by P. C. Roy Choudhury.

4. MANDAR HILL

Mandar Hill is about 700 feet high and is situated about 30 miles south of the town of Bhagalpur. There is a branch railway line of the Eastern Railway connecting Bhagalpur with Mandar Hill and Mandar Hill station is the terminus of the branch line. Mandar Hill station is about three miles from Mandar Hill. There is also a good all-weather road connecting Bhagalpur to Dumka, the headquarters of Santal Parganas district, and Mandar Hill is about a mile from the road at a certain point. A large number of passenger buses connect Bhagalpur with Dumka either way and Mandar Hill is easily approachable by the buses as well. Mandar Hill is within the Banka sub-division of Bhagalpur district and ekkas—light vehicles drawn by single horses—are available at Banka and Baunsi as well. Baunsi is a growing township and has a more salubrious climate than Bhagalpur and aspires to be a health resort. Baunsi is about five miles from Mandar Hill towards Bhagalpur.

The hill consists of a huge mass of granite overgrown near the summit with low jungles. There are two temples near the top of the hill, approached by steps cut out of the rock. Mandar Hill is held very sacred in Hindu mythology and finds mention in the *Mandar Mahatmya*—a portion of *Skanda Purana*. An idea of the antiquity and legend of Mandar Hill can be had properly in the light of the antiquity and tradition of the district where Mandar Hill is situated.

Bhagalpur district is a part of ancient Anga and is an area hoary with traditions and legends. *Atharva-veda* mentions the people of Anga. It is said that Titikshu, the

second son of Mahamanas, the seventh in descent from Anu, had founded the kingdom Anava and named it after its ancestors. The Asura king Bali had five *kshetraja* sons from his wife Sudeshna, namely, Anga, Vanga, Kalinga, Pundra and Sumha. The Anava kingdom was expanded under that Asura king and five kingdoms were carved out of it and named after his five sons. Separated from Magadha by the river Champa, Anga comprised of the modern districts of Bhagalpur and Monghyr. Malini was the capital of Anga *desha* and later on, in *Matsya Purana*, we find mention of Champa Malini as the capital. There is frequent mention of the place in the *Vana Parva* of *Mahabharata* as a place of pilgrimage.

Not much is known about the genealogy of the kings of Anga, but Lomapada, the seventh in the genealogical list, was known to be a friend of King Dasharatha of Ayodhya. Champa was the great grandson of Lomapada and during his time the capital was re-named as Champa or Champapuri. Champapuri is often mentioned in the *Mahabharata* and later in the Buddhist works. It has been a citadel of Buddhism as well as Hinduism. The large finds of Buddhistic relics throughout the district indicate that Anga *desha* was very much under Buddhistic influence. The area was also sanctified as the birth-place of Basupujya, the 12th Jaina *Tirthankara* and was closely associated with Parsva, the 23rd Jain *Tirthankara*. Lord Mahavira Vardhamana, the 24th and last Jaina *Tirthankara*, had spent three rainy seasons at Champapuri. At the time of the Buddha, Champa was one of the six great cities, along with Rajagriha, Sravasti, Saketa, Kausambi and Varanasi. Subhadraangi, Asoka's mother, was born at Champa. Champa is also associated with a number of *Jataka* stories, wherein we read of merchants boarding the ships at Champa and going to Ceylon and other areas.

Anga *desha* was virtually the confluence of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

Later, this area appears to have come under Satanika Parantap, the king of the Vatsyas, whose capital was Kausambi near Allahabad. Satanika Parantap had attacked Champa, which was then under the rule of King Dadhivahana. It appears that a later king, Bhattiya of Magadha, was defeated by Brahmadatta of Anga; but Bimbisara (c. 603-551 B.C.), son of Bhattiya, avenged his father's defeat and annexed Anga to his empire. Anga, with Champa as the capital, remained a part of the Magadhan empire for centuries to come.

As a part of Magadha, Anga experienced the vicissitudes and changes of the ruling dynasties of the Magadhan empire. The Sisunagas, Nandas, Mauryas, Sungas and the Guptas, as the rulers of the Magadhan empire, had control over Magadha some time or other. Bhagalpur district, which was the core of Anga *desha*, had also a full impact of the renaissance of Indian art which the Guptas had ushered in. Many of the finely executed relics and statues that have been later found in Bhagalpur district could be ascribed to the Gupta era. A copper statue of the Buddha measuring $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height, discovered at Sultanganj, is an exquisite specimen which is now kept in the Birmingham Museum. This is one of the finest of the finds in Bhagalpur district. Fa-hien and Hieun-tsang had both visited Bhagalpur district. The district has also the site of the famous Vikramshila University, as the recent excavations at Patharghatta region near Colgong have unearthed a large number of relics which go to substantiate the claim of this area as the site of that great university. It may be noted that a number of other places within Bhagalpur district have also been suggested as the site of that ancient university of Vikramshila, by scholars like Cunningham, Dr.

Satischandra Vidya Bhusan, N.L. Dey, A.P. Banerjee Shastri and others.

Eventually the Palas had become, as is well known, the rulers of Vanga and Gauda, an area actually comprising the whole of what is now East and West Bengal. Anga, too, passed into their hands. Champa was probably the capital of Gauda for some time. This appears from the study of the Jainagar inscription. Whatever it be, it is clear that, under the Palas, Anga *desha* had an era of prosperity and a revival of culture. The Bhagalpur copper plate of Narayana Pala indicates that this monarch had recovered north Bengal and Bihar from the hands of the Pratihara king Mahendra Pala (c. 885-910 A.D.), who had previously defeated him. An inscription dated the sixth year of the reign of Gopala II, who had succeeded Narayana Pala, has been found at Jajimpara in Malda district (West Bengal) and it refers to a victorious camp of Gopala II at Ghataparbatika. Ghataparbatika is traditionally associated with Bateshwarsthan at Patharghatta, near Colgong, which is now once again accepted as the site of Vikramshila University. Later the Sena kings also had their impact on Anga.

Mandar Hill is a great place of pilgrimage although it is not so well known now. The relics on Mandar Hill indicate a confluence of two religions, Hinduism and Jainism, and side by side there are temples held sacred by the followers of these two creeds. Mandar Hill temples were desecrated by Kala Pahar and one of the idols, Madhusudan Bhagwan, was removed by someone and enshrined in a temple at Baunsi. Especially on *Makar Sankranti* day thousands of local pilgrims visit the temples at Mandar, which are now in ruins. The numerous relics of buildings, tanks, large wells and stone figures, found for a mile or two round the base of this sacred hill, indicate that once

there was a large city here. The popular story is that the city at the foot of the hill had 52 markets, 53 streets and 88 tanks. According to local tradition, on the night of the *Divali* festival a large building (the ruins of which are still there and the walls of which contain an immense number of small holes, evidently to hold *chiraghs* or small lamps) was formerly illuminated by thousands of lights, each householder supplying one light only.

Now for a description of the relics at Mandar Hill. The two temples at the top are to be approached by stages, as it were. At the foot of the hill there is a tank called Papaharini and from the vicinity of the tank three routes lead to the top of the hill. The name of the tank Papaharini is suggestive. There is a legend about the tank. There was a king in Karnatak, Chola by name, who is supposed to have taken a bath in the tank on *Makar Sankranti* day before he went to offer his puja at the temple atop the hill. It is said that the king was cured of the disease from which he was suffering. Some say it was leprosy while others suggest that it was a persistent skin trouble. The reputation that the tank has gained for curing ailments attracts a large number of people to it on the *Makar Sankranti* day for a bath. From 4 A.M. till 12 noon, hundreds of people have their bath in this tank and a big *mela* is held near the tank. Thousands collect to have a *darshan* of Madhusudan Bhagwan particularly on this day. It is said that this deity was enshrined at the temple of Mandar, but left the hill and went to Baunsi when the temple was desecrated by Kala Pahar. On the *Makar Sankranti* day the image is brought out from Baunsi and is taken in a procession to Mandar. After a worship at Mandar Hill it is taken back to Baunsi. Papaharini tank also attracts a large number of bathers on *Mekh Sankranti*, solar eclipse, lunar eclipse, *Bhado Purnima*, *Kartik Purnima* and *Maghi Pur-*

nima days. The water of the tank is often taken for being kept in the houses of the devotees, who regard it to be as sacred as the waters of the Ganga. There is a dak bungalow belonging to the Forest Department near this tank.

Near Papaharini tank at the foot of the hill there are a number of ruined temples said to have been destroyed by Kala Pahar.

Of the three routes which lead from the Papaharini tank to the top of the hill, the path a little to the east is much used. On this path stairs have been cut out of the stone. The legend is that these stairs had been cut at the instance of king Ugra Bhairab. A few yards up this path there is a headless idol or an image. It is the image of either Durga or Kali and it is said that Kala Pahar had beheaded the idol. A little higher up there is a small idol on a small pillar. This idol is worshipped as the Sun God. Further up there is another very big idol having three faces and ten hands. This deity is Mahakal Bhairab. A little higher but in close proximity to Mahakal Bhairab, there is a small image of Sri Ganesha. Near the latter image, as you go up, there is an idol of Saraswati which is about two feet high. Near the idol of Mahakal Bhairab and just by the side of the stairs, there is a three-line inscription.

Two very thick and remarkably parallel lines run round the hill. It is difficult to believe that any human hand could possibly have drawn them. The lines are at a distance of about six feet from each other and look as if a motor vehicle with grooved tyres had passed over the hill. The story goes that this hill was bound with a serpent and the sea was churned with it at the time of *Samudra Manthan*. The steep granite hill hardly offers any foothold and engineers are of the opinion that it is extremely diffi-

cult for any human agency to make these marks round the massive hill without modern equipment.

After a pilgrim passes the image of Mahakal Bhairab, he will feel as if a lot more of physical exertion has to be put in to reach the summit, especially as the path becomes extremely steep. In spite of the steps cut out of the stone, it is far from easy to ascend. Here also one finds some inscriptions which are not very distinct. Near about these inscriptions there is another female deity with eight hands. This image is worshipped as Saraswati. Above this idol one comes across two paths and both of them lead to a cave temple of Narsingh Bhagwan. There is a tank known as Sita Kund. One of these paths passes by Sita Kund while the other skirts another tank called Sunkh Kund. Sita Kund tank is about 500 feet long and 100 feet wide and is situated in front of the ruins of the oldest temple, at a level of 500 feet above the surrounding plain. Near Sita Kund there are three large tamarind trees which offer shade to the pilgrims. The cave temple of Narsingh Bhagwan is carved out of the hill and the roof is so low that one cannot stand up in it. Near the cave temple there is one small *ashram* constructed of bricks and stones. The *ashram* apparently accommodated some hermits in the past. The *ashram* is now empty.

On the summit of the hill there are two small temples. One of the temples contains six marks of human feet. These marks are held sacred and the legend is that they are the foot-marks of Vishnu, Saraswati and Laxmi. There are two other temples at the summit occupied by the Jains and are used by them as places of pilgrimage. The Jain temples are built of stone and mortar and are evidently not very old.

The summit of the hill commands exquisite scenery. The tanks surrounding the hill, the fields and the two rivers, the Chir and the Chandan, look very beautiful.

Mandar Hill is extremely valuable for the antiquarian and the Hindu and Jain pilgrims. According to the legend commonly believed, it was here that Vishnu had defeated the notorious giant Madhukaitab in a battle that had lasted for ten thousand years, and ultimately the Mandar Hill had been thrust over the body of Madhukaitab, so that the monster could not do any further harm to the earth. We have also referred to the legend, to be found in the *Puranas* and the *Mahabharata*, that this hill was used for churning the ocean to extract the nectar from its bosom (*Samudra Manthan*). It is known that, with the break-up of the Gupta empire, the later Guptas of Magadha, whose connections with the imperial Guptas have not been fully ascertained, established supremacy over Magadha. Adityasena, son of Madhava Gupta, was the eighth king of this line and came to be known as a great administrator. An inscription of Adityasena has been discovered on the Mandar Hill. This inscription relates that both he and his queen Sri Kondadevi had installed an image of Narahari (Man-lion), an incarnation of Vishnu, on the hill, and that the queen performed an act of piety by excavating a tank, known as Papaharini, at the foot of the said hill. Papaharini was also known as Manohar Kund. The *Mandar Mahatmya*, a portion of the *Skanda Purana*, describes Mandar Hill. It is said that the oldest temples at the summit were erected by Raja Chhatra Sen of the Chol tribe, who lived before the time of the Muhammadans. Some of the carvings on the rocks are taken by some to be shell writings. Mandar Hill is also very important as it has the unique image of Vishnu, probably the only sculpture in Bihar where Vishnu, in his man-lion incarnation, has not been shown as tearing Hiranyakashipu. The image is 34 inches high and made of black stone. It belongs to the Gupta period.

5. SULTANGANJ

Sultanganj is a town in Bhagalpur district and has a railway station of the same name on the loop-line of the Eastern Railway running from Calcutta to Kiul. It is also served by an excellent all-weather road connecting Bhagalpur with Monghyr and Patna. It has a cosmopolitan population of about eleven thousand persons. It is a flourishing business place and there are a number of schools and colleges.

Sultanganj is a place of hoary antiquity. It is traditionally associated with the sage Jahnu, whose *ashram* was a centre of learning and culture. Jahnu Muni's *ashram* was located on the rock jutting out of the bed of the Ganga river. Now the site has the Shiva temple of Ajgaivinath, also known as Gaibinath Mahadeo. The story is that the river Ganga on her way to the ocean interrupted the Muni in his meditation by the rush of her currents. The sage swallowed the river in a gulp. Bhagiratha intervened and the Muni again let her out by making an incision in his thigh. That is why the river Ganga is also called Jahnavi.

Like many of the ancient temples, the origin of Ajgaivinath temple is also shrouded in mystery. According to one legend, Lord Shiva was given his bow here, known as Ajgay, and so the place came to be known as Ajgaivinath. The ancient name of the place was Jahangira which was derived from the name of Jahnu Muni. Jahangira is a distorted form of Jahnu *giri* (the hill of Jahnu) or Jahnu *griha* (the abode of Jahnu). Jahangira is now a small village forming a part of the town of Sultanganj. The name Jahangira for the rock had continued till at least

1824-25, when Bishop Heber visited the area. In *Heber's Journal*, Vol. I, there is a pencil sketch of the temple on the rock under the caption of Jahangira. The pencil sketch depicts a mosque by the side of the temple. It is commonly said that Kala Pahar, in the course of his crusade against the Hindu temples, visited the place. He tried his best but failed to demolish Ajgaivinath temple. He could, however, destroy the Parvati temple on the neighbouring hill, and built a mosque there. Formerly the hill was much bigger and more spacious. This part of the Ganga has high floods with very strong currents almost every year and the decaying granite rocks of the hill are being slowly worn away.

Traditionally Sultanganj formed a part of the great Anga State. In the days of the *Mahabharata*, Karna, the sixth brother of the five Pandavas, ruled in Anga. The capital of Anga was Champa. Champa is the present Champanagar situated three miles to the west of Bhagalpur. King Karna had his castles at Champa (modern Champanagar) and Jahnugiri (modern Sultanganj). At present Champanagar, the site of Karna's castle, is well known as Karnagarh. Karnagarh is practically a part of Bhagalpur town now. Some scholars have associated the large plateau of Karnagarh in Bhagalpur, where there are still ramparts of a fort, as one of the famous pre-Buddhist forts. The site had several bastions and ditches. When the British took over, the area was selected for housing the Hill Rangers, a body of troops raised from among the Santals of Rajmahal Hills. For some time this was the headquarters of the wing of an Indian regiment and slowly the bastions have disappeared although the ditches are still there. The plateau is now mainly occupied by the State Constable Training School. Karnagarh area of Sultanganj which had King Karna's castle, is also a large plateau. It is now called

Krishnagarh, after the name of a zamindar of the branch of Raj Banaili, by the name of Kumar Krishnanand Singh, who built a large residential structure on the site.

Sultanganj was also famous during the rule of the Pala and Sena kings (from 730 A.D. to 1199 A.D.). It is said that Dharmapala, the first king of the Pala dynasty, had laid the foundation of the Vikramshila University at Sultanganj. This claim, however, is now not finding much support and the said famed University is deemed to have been at Patharghatta near Colgong in Bhagalpur district. The relics discovered by excavations there, along with other circumstantial evidence, suggest that Patharghatta was probably the real site of Vikramshila University. But there is no doubt that during the Pala and Sena kings, Sultanganj area was bestowed with a number of fine works of art and architecture. Numerous ancient relics like *stupas*, seals, coins, terracotta and images have been found in Sultanganj. A bronze Buddha image, now in the Birmingham Museum, is probably the best known relic discovered in Sultanganj. This bronze image is a fine piece of metallised sculpture which has drawn the admiration of the world. The image is characterised by delicacy of design and ornamental detail.

Some of the other important antiquities of Sultanganj, now preserved in the Patna Museum, are:

- (1) *Mukhalinga*, height $9\frac{1}{4}$ ", of black stone, with face of a male.
- (2) Buddha in *Bhumisparsa Mudra*, height 8", broken, inscribed, in black stone.
- (3) Buddha in a preaching pose seated on a lotus upheld by a *nag*, broken, $9" \times 6"$, in black stone, inscribed.
- (4) Black stone torso of a dancing figure, $8\frac{1}{2}" \times 7"$.

- (5) Black stone torso of a seated preaching Buddha figure, $4'' \times 2''$.
- (6) One black stone *mukhalinga*, $1'' \times 1''$.
- (7) Upper half of a black stone *prabha torana* of a Buddhist image arch consisting of three bands of floral decorations. Centre of the arch is occupied by a *kriti mukha* flanked by two flying Gandharvas and two panels containing Bodhisatva figures. In the corner is a temple with a mutilated Bodhisatva figure, measurement $1' 6\frac{1}{2}'' \times 1' 5'' \times 5\frac{3}{4}''$.
- (8) Torso of a black stone figure of Bodhisatva with a seated Buddha figure, $2' 7'' \times 1' 4\frac{1}{4}''$.
- (9) Head of a stone figure of Bhairab, $1' 3'' \times 11''$.
- (10) A number of old gold ornaments and coins.

The Murli Hill of Sultanganj situated just on the bank of the Ganga, from where one has to take the boat to visit the Ajgaivinath temple at mid-Ganga, is also a place of antiquity. It contains a Gupta inscription and a number of Hindu and Buddhistic images. There are large stone slabs and other relics to show that there were temples as well on this hill. Now the hill has got a mosque at its summit which is ascribed to Ikhtiyar Muhammad Khilji, son of Bakhtiyar Khilji. Ikhtiyar Muhammad Khilji is taken to be the fanatic who had destroyed Nalanda and Vikramshila Universities towards the close of the 12th century A.D. Most of the other images left unmolested at Murli Hill were disfigured by Kala Pahar, another fanatic who was the military commander of Daud Khan, the Ruler of Bengal. Daud Khan had revolted against Akbar in 1573 and had held out till his force was routed and he was put to death by the imperial force near Rajmahal in 1576.

There is not much evidence, however, to show that Sultanganj came under the influence of the Jains. This is rather peculiar, as Champanagar or Bhagalpur had been visited by the 23rd *Tirthankara* Parsva and the 24th or the last *Tirthankara* Mahavira Vardhamana. Champanagar had been visited by Lord Mahavira several times and it is recorded that he had spent three *Parjjusanas* (rainy season retirement) there. Champanagar was also the birth-place of Birja-Jina and another Jain scholar, Palakpaya Muni, the author of *Hasti-Ayurveda*, an elaborate account of the ailments of elephants. Champanagar is also the birth-place of the 12th Jain *Tirthankara* Basupujya and at Nathnagar, contiguous to Champanagar, there is a Jain temple of the Digambaras dedicated to Basupujya. It is somewhat unlikely that Sultanganj, being so close to Champanagar, would not have come under the Jain influence in some way or other. Rather it could be suggested that, if excavations are still carried out at some of the well-known sites at Sultanganj, Jain relics might be discovered.

Regarding the find of a large number of Buddhist images and particularly the very fine image of the Buddha now in the Birmingham Museum, one has to remember that when Hieun Tsang visited Champa he had found several *Sangharamas* (Viharas) mostly in ruins, with about two hundred Buddhist monks. At that time (606-647 A.D.) the area was under the rule of the Khetauri kings of Mal origin and they were very antagonistic to the Buddhist monks. But Buddhism had another spurt in Anga during the Pala kings. Under Dharmapala (c. 770-810 A.D.), the son of Gopala, the frontier of the Anga empire touched the west of the Sone River. Dharmapala was a great Buddhist and a patron of education and culture. He is supposed to have founded Vikramshila Vihara on a

hillock on the bank of the Ganga in Northern Magadha. Cunningham had identified Vikramshila Vihara with the village of Silao near Baragaon. Dr. Satish Chandra Vidyabhusan came out with the theory that it was Sultanganj which was the site of Vikramshila University. N. L. Dey had identified it with the Patharghatta Hill near Colgong, while Dr. A. P. Banerji Shastri took it to be Keur village near Ausalganj. There is another theory that Vikramshila University was in the area where there are the present villages of Orip, Antichak and Madhorampur near Batesharasthan, six miles north of the Colgong station. Excepting Silao all the other places are in Bhagalpur district.

It is remarkable that Jahangira had persisted in being an important place in the kingdom of Anga through all the ages, Vedic, Epic, Buddhistic, as well as in the days of the Muslim rule and later. The origin of Ajgaivinath temple at Jahangira or Sultanganj is not exactly known. Some claim it to be a *Swayambhu* on the rock, discovered and then given an abode. That this is a very ancient place of worship there can be no doubt. The three temples of Shiva, namely, the Ajgaivinath temple at Sultanganj, Basukinath temple at Basukinath near Dumka and the temple of Vaidyanath at Deoghar in Santal Parganas are the three most famous Shiva temples in Bihar and they have attracted lakhs of pilgrims every year from a long time past. Even now large bands of devotees are found walking carrying holy Ganga water, chanting *mantras* and making a pilgrimage to all these three Shiva temples. The temple is solidly built on the rock and has got a series of marvellous rock sculpture and some inscriptions. Some of the specimens of the rock panel sculpture at this temple can hold their own against any of the best known specimens anywhere in India. Not much study, unfortunately,

has been made of the rock sculpture and inscriptions here. The sculpture could be taken to be of the later Pala period.

The site is very attractive and, particularly during the rainy season, the splashing waters of Mother Ganga wash the feet of the temple. The present *Mahant* of the temple is a Nepali *Sadhu* and there are good arrangements for offering *puja* at the temple. The *pandas* are co-operative and not avaricious. On auspicious days the crowd is enormous. There is hardly any accommodation for the pilgrims if they wish to stay back and so they all have got to clear out before evening and at least go to Sultanganj where there are *dharmashalas*. There is no dearth of boats at Sultanganj Ghat and the boat charges are very nominal and do not go beyond four annas if a boat is shared with others. The temple has recently been given electricity which is a great advantage.

It is, however, strange that the famous Shiva temple known as Ajgaivinath, which is ancient and so widely known, should have a name with a Muslim impress. It is clear that during the Muslim rule the name of Jahangira was changed to Sultanganj and the name has stuck through the British period to this day.

6. KONCH

Konch is a large village about eighteen miles from Gaya on the Gaya-Daudnagar road. Gaya is the headquarters of the Gaya district and is served by the Gaya railway station of the Eastern Railway (Grand Chord line). It is also well situated on an all-weather road from Calcutta to Mughalsarai. Passenger buses run daily from Gaya to Daudnagar via Konch. Horse-drawn light vehicles (ekkas) are also available. There is an Inspection Bungalow available to the public at Tikari, which is four miles away from Konch. Ekkas are also available at Tikari. Passenger buses too ply from Tikari.

Konch contains remains of numerous temples, but the principal one is an ancient temple entirely of bricks. The temple is a square building, the dimension of which on the outside is 27 feet 6 inches square with a chamber inside 11 feet square. The entrance is to the east. The height is nearly 70 feet. It has two storeys. The lower storey is vaulted in the Hindu fashion, that is, it has two arched roofs meeting in a ridge. The upper storey is formed by bricks overlapping on all the four sides till they meet at a point. The doorway is almost as high as the room inside. The construction of the temple in bricks is a feat of high engineering skill considering the time it was built.

There is a *mandap* or a flat-roofed pillared hall in front. The *mandap* has now crumbled down. The stone pillars that supported it are lying in front of the temple. They are granite pillars and are ornamented by a single lotus carved on each of the faces in the lowest square portions of the pillars. This *mandap* was most likely built to

form a roof for the accommodation of the large collection of statues assembled there.

A casual look at the Konch temple brings to mind the image of the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya. As a matter of fact, there is a theory that the ancient brick-built temple at Konch served as the model for the Mahabodhi temple. But the Konch temple differs from the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya in that the latter has its four sides straight from top to bottom, while the Konch temple has its sides curved in the upper portion. Moreover, the Bodh Gaya temple has numerous niches with images and ornamentations on the exterior of its walls, whereas the exterior of the Konch temple has no such niches. In the temple at Konch each wall is divided externally into seven phases by deeply recessed upright lines. These divisions still remain strongly pronounced, while the curved ornamentation is mostly concealed by a general coat of plaster. There is a *lingam* of Koncheswar Mahadeva inside the temple. It would seem that a new floor has been constructed later at a somewhat higher level, so that the *lingam* now appears standing in a hollow. From this hollow a small channel leads to the north to carry off the oblation water poured over the *lingam*. The outlet of this channel is still there on the north side. This shows that this channel formed a part of the original construction.

The temple is built of properly shaped, well-burnt bricks though of different sizes. Some bricks measure $11'' \times 5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 2\frac{3}{4}''$, some $9'' \times 4\frac{3}{4}'' \times 2\frac{3}{4}''$ and others $13'' \times 7\frac{1}{2}'' \times 2\frac{3}{4}''$. The use of different types of bricks is, perhaps, an indication that the temple has undergone extensive repairs from time to time, as held by Cunningham and Beglar of the Archaeological Survey of India. It is, however, clear that the last reconstruction was done quite a considerable period ago. Konch temple or the area around

is not protected under the Ancient Monuments Act and the temple is decaying rapidly.

The entrance to the temple is, as usual, presented by a great rent or opening in the face of the tower. It consists of vertical sides, spanned by an arch of overlapping small-sized bricks of the shape of a tall isosceles triangle with indented sides. This entrance is divided into two parts by a stone right across a lower rectangular one. The lower rectangular portion gives admission into the sanctum. The portion above consists of an upper rectangle surmounted by a triangular opening. This upper portion of the opening leads to the upper chamber. J. D. Beglar, Assistant Archaeological Surveyor at that time, had visited the place during 1872-73 and he has mentioned in his report (1878) that the tower was surmounted by a cylindrical pinnacle as in the case of the temple of Bodh Gaya. This pinnacle had a hemispherical top. It also appears from his observations that the upper portion of the opening threw light on the object of worship, while the front of the object was dark. With the construction of the upper chamber the whole of the interior has now become dark.

The statues and other relics, whether inside or lying about, are Brahmanical. Inside the temple there are statues of Haragauri and the Ashta Saktis. The most interesting piece inside the shrine is a panel sculpture of the *Dashavataras* representing Vishnu. A remarkable fact is that the Konch temple representation of the *Dashavataras* differs from such representations elsewhere as it divides the *Vamana avatara* into two scenes by leaving out the ninth or the *Buddha avatara* and by representing Vishnu in the tenth or *Kalki avatara* along with a female deity with a small horse standing in front. These *Dashavataras* are exquisitely sculptured. The fish incarnation is represented by a fish standing vertically on its tail. The

tortoise incarnation bears a close resemblance to the Saivic emblems of the *argha* and *lingam* with the sole addition of a couple of human figures on the sides holding a string which is wound round the *lingam*; the lingam thus does the duty of Mount Mandar. This temple of Siva worship is clearly of Brahmanical origin. The construction, the images and the tradition all support this.

It has not yet been definitely established as to when this temple was originally constructed. The massiveness of the pillars shows that it must have been built at a very early period. Tradition assigns it to Bhairavendra and also suggests it was dedicated to Surya. The following lines of a ballad very popular in the area were recorded by Beglar when he carried out the archaeological survey in 1872-73:

*Konch base' sab soch mitc'
Durj Raj pasend Maha'mun gyan'
Bed Puranan Ki Charcha'
Tanha' Punjat hei a'd Bhawa'ni'
Sah, sara'f, haraf, chaab jiwan par bin bhakha'ni
Tatenhi Tatenhi Thun Mathu Ki Ja'nha' det
Abhy bar Sewsimbha Bhawasii.*

These lines mean:

“Konch was established, all troubles ceased, Durj Raj chose a wise Mahamuni (as chief?), and discourse of Vedas and Puranas spread. There is worshipped Bhavani; merchants, good men, evil men, all life (heard of) the fame; on going (there) the gift of fearlessness and virile strength is bestowed by Siva and Bhavani.” (Translation is Beglar's).

Beglar, however, himself recorded that many people of the locality did not agree with the interpretation, as many of the words are obsolete. At present these lines are

almost forgotten in the locality. It may be mentioned that Konch or Koncheswara is a name of Lord Siva.

It was suggested that the lingam inside and the panel of sculpture of the *Dashavatara*, coupled with the absence of figures or images on the exterior, indicated that this Siva temple was of prior origin to the Buddhist edifices in the Gaya district. The exterior of the temple with the missing cylindrical pinnacle mentioned by Beglar has further led to the theory that the Konch temple was the model on which the Mahabodhi temple of Bodh Gaya was built. This theory has not, however, been investigated properly.

In Hiuen Tsang's description this temple is stated to have been built by a Brahman. He puts the probable date of the construction between the First and Sixth Century A.D.

Beglar's visit to the temple in 1872-73 has left for us a record of how he found the temple. Beglar has also given his opinion as to the age of the temple and discards the view that it was originally a Buddhist *chaitya* where a *lingam* was introduced. According to him the temple is clearly a Brahmanical one and dedicated to Lord Siva. He has fully supported Hiuen Tsang's observation that this was a Hindu temple.

Beglar's account of the external shape of the Konch temple is interesting and may be quoted. He observed*:

"The external shape of the tower, however, differs from that of the great Buddha Gaya temple in being a curved and not a straight-sided pyramid; it is consequently more graceful than the temple at Buddha Gaya. The ornamentation externally consists of a great oval on each face, at a point nearly in the middle of the total height of the tower proper, and of various mouldings and indentations

* *Archaeological Survey of India*, Vol. VIII of 1878.

rather sparingly used; the whole of the ornamentation is of brick cut to shape, and it is evident from the way the ornaments are distributed, that the whole of it was cut on the external faces of the tower after it had been built up plain. The labour required may easily be imagined too; this is due to the fact that the face of the brick-work is so even; for I do not think it possible without subsequent laborious rubbing down, that any amount of care in setting the bricks, and in the preservation of the shape and sharpness of edges of the bricks during manufacture, could produce the wonderfully smooth even face that the work has to this day, notwithstanding the ravages of time.

“The temple does not appear to have been originally covered with plaster, but portions of it are now covered with plaster, the remains, no doubt, of a coat put on at some subsequent period.

“The tower is, or was surmounted by a cylindric pinnacle like the temple of Buddha Gaya. This sort of pinnacle is very remarkable, and its form resembling a *lingam* may be more than a mere accident of construction. Constructively, it was evidently impossible to form in brick the *amalaka* which invariably surmounts temples of stone, itself again surmounted by either urns or tapering discs ending in a spire.”

Major General Cunningham, however, was of the opinion that the date of this temple should be ascribed to the Eighth Century A.D. According to the commonly accepted tradition, however, the temple was built by Bhairavendra who lived in 1450 A.D. There is no accurate information as to when this Bhairavendra actually lived. It has been pointed out that the style and the general appearance of the temple have a great similarity to the temples at Deo and Umga in Gaya district. The two

temples at Deo and Umga are taken to have been built about the 8th century A.D.

Major General Cunningham and H. B. Garriek who had visited the place in 1880-81 have observed*:

“I found nothing that appeared to give any clue to the age of the temple save the great front opening formed by overlapping bricks, like those of Buddha Gaya temple, and the later temples of Deo-Barnarak and Mahadeopur. From its general resemblance in other respects to the Barnarak temples, I conclude that it may be of the same age, that is about the 8th century A.D.”

T. Bloch, Archaeological Surveyor, Bengal Circle, had visited the area in 1902 and, agreeing with this view, had observed about Konch, Utren, Deo and Umga temples in Bihar as follows**:

“I have grouped these places together, because I consider it evident that the temple at Konch is of the same period as the temple at Deo and Umga. The resemblance in style is remarkable. It originally had in front a flat-roofed pillared hall or *mandapa* which still may be seen on an old photograph, taken by Mr. Peppe, but which now has fallen in, the stone pillars supporting it still lying in front of the temple. The same is characteristic for the temples at Deo and Umga, and the ornamentation of the Spire at Deo also is of the same kind as at Konch. The temple at Umga is plain, without ornaments. Moreover, tradition points to Bhairavendra, who lived about 1459 A.D., as the builder of the Konch temple. From his time also date, as we know from local inscriptions, the principal monuments at Deo and Umga. For these reasons, I think that the hitherto accepted date of the Konch temple, viz.,

* *Archaeological Survey of India*, Vol. XVI of 1883.

** *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey, Bengal Circle for the year ending with April 1902.*

eighth century A.D. should be put back for some seven centuries. The temple at Konch is not in a good state of preservation; although repaired some time ago, a great portion of the brick wall in front of the spire has fallen down. The building is worth being kept in a permanent state of repairs."

To the east of the temple there is a large sheet of water with brick-covered mounds on all sides. In the west there is a ruined temple, 12 feet 3 inches square inside, and at the north-western corner there is a second ruined temple only 7 feet 8 inches square inside, with walls 2 feet 9½ inches thick. The Konch village which stands to the south of the lake and the great temple have also several sculptured images of which the best are a figure of Vishnu and a seated Buddha.

The temple is daily visited by a large number of local devotees. Special *pūja* is offered on *Shivaratri* and other auspicious days to propitiate Lord Shiva when large crowds visit the temple. A big *mela* is held during the *Shivaratri* festival and thousands of people assemble in the *mela*.*

It is a pity such an important and famous temple, which may have been taken as a model for the Mahabodhi temple of Gaya, should remain neglected and unprotected under the Ancient Monuments Act. Rapid decay has already set in and it is believed a large number of relics have already been removed.

* Sources:—(i) *Archaeological Survey of India*, Vol. VIII of 1878 (pages 54 to 61).

(ii) *Ibid*, Vol. XVI of 1883 (pages 52 to 59).

(iii) *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey, Bengal Circle for the year ending with April, 1902*, (page 13).

(iv) *District Gazetteer of Gaya*, 1957, pp. 328-29.

7. MUNDESVARI

Mundesvari temple stands on the summit of an isolated hill about 600 feet high, at village Ramgarh, seven miles south-west of Bhabua, a sub-divisional headquarters of Shahabad district. The township of Bhabua is about eight miles from Bhabua Road railway station on the Grand Chord line of the Eastern Railway. Bhabua Road is directly on the famous National Highway known as the Grand Trunk road. The road from Bhabua Road railway station to Bhabua is a first-class, all-weather road and passenger buses and *tangas* drawn by horses are available. Grand Trunk is one of the best roads in India and so Bhabua is easily accessible by motor transport either from Calcutta or Delhi side. The seven-mile road from Bhabua to Ramgarh is a fair-weather road. *Tangas* are available at Bhabua.

Mundesvari temple is the earliest specimen of the *Nagara* type of temple architecture available in Bihar. It is unfortunate that, although a distinct style of temple architecture, known as the *Nagara* type, was evolved in Magadha with its centre at Pataliputra, specimens of it even in Bihar are very rare. This gives an added importance to the Mundesvari temple, although much of the structure has crumbled down. From the point of view of the age of temples, this is the oldest in Bihar.

The temple is in the shape of an octagon (*ashtasra*) and an octagonal ground plan for a temple is rather rare. The Sankaracharya temple at Srinagar built in the 18th century is another example. In the Mundesvari temple there are doors or windows on four sides and small niches

for the reception of statues in the remaining four walls. The principal entrance is evidently to the east where a few pillars are still to be seen. These pillars must have once supported a portico. Inside the temple there is a *lingam* with four heads and a statue of Durga, together with a large stone vessel and a stone chest. Most of the latticed stone work on the windows has now disappeared but some of the specimens are preserved in the window to the north.

The temple door facing the porch is a fine specimen of architecture with various figures of dancers and musicians. An inscription in two broken pieces was found and has been interpreted by some, as discussed later, to identify the origin of the temple to the year 635 A.D. The inscription refers to Udayasena as the ruling chief and records various donations to Mandalesvara.

There is clear impress of the Gupta style on the carvings. The temple was literally rescued from the jungles and debris at the beginning of this century. The clearance of the jungle brought to light a number of ancient relics. On the eastern slope of the hill a number of statues and rock-carved figures were discovered. The relics make it clear that the hill was once the site for a cluster of temples and the Mundesvari temple, at the summit, must have been the main shrine.

It is very fortunate that Francis Buchanan, in his account of the District of Shahabad in 1812-13, has left a description of the Mundesvari temple and the tradition associated with it. Buchanan did not actually visit the place but sent a painter who drew a most remarkable likeness of it. Buchanan states: "The temple, now very ruinous, has been an octagon supported by four columns of an order common in Behar, and has had a porch supported by eight similar columns; having had four doors it is much lighter than usual, although one of the doors is shut

behind. In the centre is a Siva Linga, with four human faces on the phallus. The image called Mundesvari, or the goddess Munda, is an armed female having many hands and riding on a buffalo: it probably represents the wife of Mahisasur, a celebrated antagonist of Parvati*: the hair and ears evidently resemble those of the Buddhas: it is placed in the door, behind which is a small cavity without any external opening."

Buchanan's account is of particular importance because of the tradition that was mentioned to him regarding the temple. It is as follows: "There was a certain Munda, whom people pretty generally call a Chero Raja; but the pandit of the survey says that he was a Daitya, who had a brother named Chanda, and both lived in the golden age. These brothers who, according to the *Markandeya Purana*, were the chief military officers (*senaptis*) of Sumbha and Nisumbha, two great infidel (Daitya) kings, were killed by Parvati, who on that account is called Chamunda, a title, it is said, composed of the two infidels' names. It is further said that the proper name of Chayanpur is Chanupur derived from one of the brothers who resided there, while a small temple named Mundesvari, and situated on a hill about five miles east from Chayanpur, was built by the Daitya Munda. If there is any foundation for the Puranic legend, it may refer to some exploits in the Indian warfare of Semiramis; but from the appearance of the ruins I have little doubt not only of the truth of the common report of Munda Raja having been a Chero but that he was some small chief, who retained a dependent principality long after his nation had ceased to possess the imperial dignity. The town where Munda resided is called Garohat, and was situated on the banks of the Katane, just

* Buchanan was, of course, absolutely wrong in thinking that the image represented the wife of Mahisasur.

In the eastern mouth of a valley formed between the great mass and the detached range of hills west from Bhagwanpur. The whole of this valley was originally called Mukeri Kho; but that name has of late been restricted to a large recess towards its east end, down which the Katane flows. The situation was judiciously chosen for the residence of a person such as I suppose Munda to have been; as it is not only in a very rich country, but has behind it recesses in the mountains that are capable of defence by a small force; and even in case of defeat, the mountains afford a secure means of escape. It would appear from numerous heaps of bricks that the town of Garohat extended about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from east to west, and half a mile from north to south; it has not been fortified; but I believe that all the passes into the valley have been defended by lines. I thought that I could trace a very high rampart and wide ditch running in a straight line from the great mass of hills to the detached hill east from Bhagawanpur and in the pass between the latter and the detached hill next to it towards the west, at the village of Suraiya, has been collected some fragments of images called Hanuman, who at present is a favourite in that part of the country; but none of them have the smallest resemblance to a monkey. I could trace three of them to resemble entirely, what in the ruins of the Behar Cheros were called Ganesa, Hargauri leaning on a bull and lion, and Narayana riding on Garuda. A head also resembled that of the image called Vasudeva. The work, which by the vulgar are attributed to the Cheros, extended also all along the north side of the detached hills, both east and west from Garohat, where they have left several tanks and reservoirs, and some scattered images. Among these Rumajaya my native assistant, on the road between Majhar and Garohat, observed a Buddha seated in usual posture. The most remarkable of these detached

works is, however, the temple of Mundesvari already mentioned.'*²

Martin's *Eastern India* (Vol. I, pp. 455-57) gives the plan of the structure before its conservation by the Public Works Department.

The location of the Mundesvari temple commands an exquisite view of hills and plains. The topography suggests that the area must have been used for fortification purposes in the distant past. Probably, some Hindu Rajas, who had their sway over the area, had their seat of rule nearabout. The neighbouring fort of Chayanpur is surrounded by a ditch and there are stone ramparts flanked with bastions. The fort has a large gate to the north and a smaller one to the south. The temple of Mundesvari is only about five miles from this fort. Chayanpur is apparently a distorted form of Chamundapur. Chanda and Munda, the two legendary demon brothers of *Satya Yuga*, were the commandants of Sumbha and Nisumbha, the demon kings. *Markandeya Purana* mentions that the demon kings were slain by Parvati. This is the story that was picked up in a distorted form by Francis Buchanan in the first decade of the 19th century. The story is still current with modifications. Garohat, the residence of Munda, is located on the banks of the river Katena just on the eastern side of the valley originally known as Mukari Khoh. The area was well chosen for defence purposes and the Mundesvari temple was undoubtedly the place of pilgrimage for the area.

The image of Mundesvari is not typical of the familiar image of *Mahishamardini*. This type of *Mahishamardini* is rather unusual because generally the deity is represented in the act of killing *Mahishasura*, the demon in the shape of

* *Francis Buchanan's Shahabad Report* published in 1934 by Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Patna.

a buffalo. Here the goddess is depicted with ten hands bearing the usual weapons of a *Mahishamardini* but with the difference that she is not in the act of killing *Mahishasura* but is shown as riding a buffalo representing the demon.

Mundesvari image is now the principal deity in the temple, which is visited by thousands who offer *puja* to the deity. It is, however, strange that the image of Mundesvari is found installed in one of the sub-chambers of the sanctuary and not at the centre of the *cella*, as is normally the case. A *mukhalingam* with four faces has been installed at the centre of the sanctuary of the temple, but this has not got the honour of being the presiding deity. The *mukhalingam* is deemed to bear the Gupta characteristic of art. The present position of Mundesvari has an interesting history.

Dr. K. C. Panigrahi,* sometime a Superintendent of the Eastern Archaeological Circle, has held that the presiding deity of the territory round about Mundesvari Hill was originally Narayana or Vishnu and, in 348-59 A.D., another new deity Vinitesvara was set up. There is now no trace of the Narayana image in this temple. The *mukhalingam* referred to is to be taken as the Vinitesvara who was set up by Dandanayaka Gomibhata in 348-49 A.D. The Mundesvari inscription referred to before is of great epigraphic importance and explains the background.

It may be mentioned that the stone slab containing the inscription had originally broken into two pieces, which were discovered at different times. Ultimately, they were joined together and preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Prof. R. D. Banerjee,** who first edited the epi-

* *Temple of Mundesvari* by Dr. K. C. Panigrahi—*Journal of Bihar Research Society*, Vol. XLVI, parts 1-2.

** *Epigraphica Indica*, Vol. IX, p. 289ff and the plate.

graphs, interpreted the inscription to mean that Dandanayaka Gomibhata arranged the co-existence of the Vinitesvara *math* in the temple shrine of Narayana during the reign of *Mahasamanta* Mahapratihara Maharaja Udayasena, in the year 30 of an unspecified era. Prof. Banerjee took the year 30 to be in the Harsha era commencing from 606 A.D., and assigned the epigraph to 636 A.D., which he also took to be the date of the temple. This date of the origin of the temple has been reiterated by L.S.S. O'Malley, I.C.S., in the last *District Gazetteer of Shahabad* published in 1906 and repeated in the revised edition in 1924. Dr. R. D. Banerjee's view was not, however, shared by others. The epigraphy was not a part of the temple and need not have been its contemporary. Mr. N. G. Mazumdar* studied the paleographical peculiarities of the inscription and referred the year 30 to the Gupta era 318-19 A.D., and held the date of the inscription to be 348-49 A.D. Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar, in the list of North Indian Inscriptions, No. 1257, p. 170 and fn. 4, indicated that he was not much in favour of assigning it to the Seventh Century A.D. and his remarks rather indicate that he considered the inscription to be much earlier than the Fourth Century A.D.

Dr. K. C. Panigrahi appears to have correctly related the three names in the inscriptions, namely, Narayana, Vinitesvara and Mandalesvara. He takes them to be the names of three separate deities and finds in the inscriptions indications of three periods in the religious history of the shrine. According to him, originally it was a Vaishnava shrine with Narayana as the presiding deity, succeeded nearabout Seventh Century A.D. by Shaivism and Vinitesvara, originally a subsidiary deity that became the pre-

* *Ind. Ant.* Vol. XLIX, 1920, p. 21ff.

siding deity of the place. In course of time, Mundesvari or a Mahisamardini image was installed when Shaktism had supplanted Shaivism. Mandalesvara clearly means the Lord or the presiding deity of the *mandala* (district or territory) and the ending *isvara* cannot have the same significance as it has in the names of Siva. Narayana mentioned in the inscription cannot be one and the same deity as Mandalesvara. There can also be no doubt that Mundesvari is not a distorted form of Mandalesvara as held by Prof. R. D. Banerjee. According to the commonly accepted story, which was also mentioned by Buchanan and Martin, Munda, the brother of Chanda, had established the goddess Mundesvari. Dr. Panigrahi rightly finds nothing unusual in the name as there are names of deities like Varunesvara, Indresvara, etc. The real history of the shrine was apparently forgotten and the people came fondly to believe that the Goddess was established by Munda.

Mundesvari or Parvati originally was installed as one of the three images in three sub-chambers of the sanctuary with the *mukhalingam* as the centre as indicated in Martin's plan in his *Eastern India**. But Mundesvari image, somehow, came to be preserved while the images of Kartikeya and Ganesa, the two other images in the niches, have been lost. It may be mentioned here that a large image of Ganesa is found half buried in the ruins of a small temple in the way leading to the top of the hill and might have been one of the *Parsva-devatas* originally enshrined in one of the side chambers of the Mundesvari temple.

Dr. Panigrahi's view seems to be correct and there is nothing strange about it. With the passage of time the Goddess Mundesvari, originally a *Parsva-devata* in the Shaiva shrine of Vinitesvara, became the presiding deity of the temple, although she continues in the same position

* Vol. I, pp, 455-457.

in the *cella*. The transposition appears to have taken place particularly during the time of the Cheros, a powerful aboriginal tribe who ruled over a portion of Shahabad for a long time.

Munda was a Chero king and Francis Buchanan and Martin were wrong in thinking that he had established the image of the Goddess Mundesvari. The aboriginal tribes in this part of the country are more prone to worship the female deities and there can be no wonder that Shaktism flourished with the Chero kings and the deity of Mundesvari, representing Shakti, came to be worshipped as the principal deity of the temple, where she was a minor image at one time. The *mukhalingam* which was still in the central position of the *cella*, was relegated to a minor position. The history of the temples in India shows that very few images installed in the central position have been subordinated to other deities fixed in the niches.

It is also remarkable that this temple appears to have been left unmolested when Muslim rule under Sher Shah was set up in this area. The neighbouring Chayanpur fort was one of the citadels of Sher Shah and the Muslim pockets in the neighbouring villages suggest that a much larger Muslim population had lived in the area when Muslim rule was predominant. The ravages to Mundesvari temple are not man-made but due to the passage of time. A big annual fair (*mela*) is held near the Mundesvari temple during the *Navaratra*. Buchanan Hamilton has mentioned in his memoirs that "about 2000 votaries assemble here at a fair (*mela*)". Now the *mela* is visited by even more than ten thousand persons.

Mundesvari temple is an important landmark in the story of temples in Bihar, being the oldest in age and the only specimen of *Nagara* architecture, as also because of the transposition of the prestige of the deities that has al-

ready been discussed. The area is well worth a visit and possibly excavation. It is true the *sikhara* of the temple is not in existence but a fragment of the *amalaka* (fluted finial) originally crowning the spire is still lying in the site. Round about the temple there are several half-*amalakas*. It may be safely presumed that the *bhumi-amalakas* had originally been used on the spire of the temple. From this point of view, the Mundesvari temple stands comparison with the Parasuramesvara temple at Bhubaneswar in Orissa. The exact height of the vertical portion of the temple, at which the ceiling was originally constructed, cannot now be ascertained. The sculptures on the *Chaitya*-windows, *Kirtti-mukhas*, lotus medallions, foliated vase-capitals, scrolls and arabesques show clear impress of the Gupta age. The temple has also some erotic figures.

This ancient temple owes a lot to the Archaeological Department of India. Luckily, T. Bloch visited the Mundesvari temple at the beginning of this century and recorded his impression, published in the Annual Report (for 1902) of the Archaeological Survey, Bengal Circle, as follows:

“The temple was built entirely of stone, and is now in a very ruinous state. Many of the stones have fallen down, and now form huge piles around the temple. I am afraid, to bring it into proper repair would be a very costly matter and I have for this reason not yet submitted a special report on it. But I intend doing so later on, as Hindu temples of such a high antiquity are very rare, especially in this province, and as, for this reason, it seems desirable to have the building tested by an experienced architect, who would be able to pronounce an opinion as to what can be done to it, and at what cost. My statement with regard to the age of the temple, is based partly on the form of the writing which is found all along the way up to the temple incised on the rock, evidently pilgrims’

records, partly on the style of its carvings and various ancient statues, found among the debris around the temple. Among the latter I observed a statue of Shiva, which still shows the phallic emblem of the God. As I have observed previously, this is decidedly a sign of antiquity, for, in later periods, this mark was left out in statues of the God. Inside the temple now stand a large *Chau-mukhi Mahadeo*, and a statue of Durga, both of later date than the temple. Various other remains, partly of brick buildings, are seen all along the eastern slope of the hill, also some rock-carvings, apparently of ancient times."

The Public Works Department has done some repairs to the temple. The present roof has been constructed by this Department irrespective of the original position of the ceiling.

8. PARASNATH

Parasnath Hill in Hazaribagh district is held to be the most sacred spot of the Jains all over India. Parasnath Hill, about 4481 feet high, is situated along the Grand Trunk road about 200 miles from Calcutta. The Eastern Railway (Grand Chord Line) runs by Parasnath Hill and there are two Railway stations close by, namely, Parasnath Road and Isri. There is a Rest Bungalow at Dumri about a mile from Isri station. The summit of Parasnath Hill can be reached either from the southern or the northern side. Ponies and *dandis* could be arranged at short notice.

There are two recognised routes to Parasnath Hill. One is from Isri Bazar, also known as Nimia Ghat, to the top, which is motorable for a mile, the rest being a climb of five miles. The other route is a six-mile route from Madhuban village on the road to Giridih. After $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Madhuban there is a stream called Gandharva *nala* and further up there is another stream Sita *nala*. The Jains hold the portion from Gandharva *nala* up to the summit as very sacred. It is easier to reach Parasnath from its northern side. Motor cars or passenger buses ply along this route from Dumri to Giridih and stop at Madhuban village, where there are a number of Jain temples. The village Post Office is called Parasnath. On the walls of the *mulmandir* at Madhuban there is a remarkable mural painting depicting all the temples on the Parasnath Hill. The Jains have provided rest houses and temples at the foot of the hill at Madhuban. The actual ascent starts from Madhuban.

Bihar has a very important place in the history of Jainism. The last of the *Tirthankaras* or the pathfinders of Jainism, was Vardhamana, also called Mahavira, and he was born at Kundalpur village, near Nalanda, in the Patna district. Mahavira is often described by mistake as the founder of Jainism. The creed of Jainism had been in existence long before his time and Mahavira Vardhamana is held by the Jains to be the 24th or the last *Tirthankara*. After spending 30 years in propagating Jain religion, Lord Mahavira attained *Nirvana* or ascension at Pawapuri in the district of Patna.

Parasnath Hill is Jerusalem to the Jains as, besides Mahavira, the following 20 *Tirthankaras* or pathfinders had attained *Nirvana* at this hill. Their gradation is shown within brackets:

Ajita	(second)
Samhavanatha	(third)
Abhinandana	(fourth)
Sumatinatha	(fifth)
Padma Prabhu	(sixth)
Suparsvanatha	(seventh)
Chandra Prabhu	(eighth)
Suvidhinatha or	(ninth)
Pushpadanta	
Sitalanatha	(tenth)
Shreyanshanatha	(eleventh)
Vimalanatha	(thirteenth)
Anantanatha	(fourteenth)
Dharmanatha	(fifteenth)
Shantinatha	(sixteenth)
Kunthunatha	(seventeenth)
Arahnatha	(eighteenth)
Munisuvrata	(twentieth)

Naminatha · (twentyfirst)
and Parsvanatha (twentythird)

The Jains are remarkable in one respect—they have raised most beautiful temples at various inaccessible places. They have not spared any efforts or money in order that the emblems of their faith may stand. Intensely attached to the doctrine of *Ahimsa* (harmlessness), one part of the Jains have engaged themselves in business and have spent money like water to propagate their faith through temples, libraries and pilgrimages. The other class of the Jains, who are dedicated or *Sadhus*, have denied themselves almost every physical comfort and move from place to place holding discourses and spreading the message of Jainism. It is no wonder that Parasnath Hill, which is so very important to the Jains, should have quite a few temples, the most important of which is known as *Jala Mandir*.

Parasnath Hill attracts pilgrims in their thousands from distant parts of India. The hill is also called *Samet Sikhar* but is more popular as Parasnath, having derived the name from Parsvanath, the 23rd *Tirthankara* who attained *Nirvana* there. The present temple is not very old, although the idol in the main temple is obviously ancient. The Sanskrit inscriptions at the foot of the images indicate that they were put in the temple in 1678 A.D.

The opinion of the archaeologists that the existing temple edifices on Parasnath Hill date from 1765 A.D. does not conflict with the hoary antiquity of the place in any manner. Unlike Hindu temples the Jain temples are often pulled down and re-built. It is certain that the present edifices were substituted for older edifices which were demolished.

Any description of the great temple of Parasnath will be incomplete without a few words on the cult of Jainism which took its origin in the soil of Bihar. One of the main

tenets of Jainism is that the object of life should be deliverance from the bondage of life and death which is essentially evil. The Jains believe in *Karma* and in transmigration of souls. They also believe that the law of *Karma* can be controlled to a large extent by one's daily life; that is why a Jain subjects his physique and mind to a terrific training in a sort of ascetic aloofness. A Jain *Sadhu* keeps up an incessant cleansing process in his thoughts, so that his mind may attain a state of *Kaivalya* (a sort of isolation or completeness through integration). That is the final stage of *Sadhana* a man can aspire for and through which he can have absolute *Mukti*. But, at the same time, Jainism does not merely insist on, and only evolve, a *Sramana* order, but has successfully reared an order of Jain laymen who are thriving businessmen and who have given liberally for the propagation of their faith.

Ahimsa of Jain philosophy has to be taken in a broad sense. They do not eat any kind of meat. Jain *Siddhanta* recognises a sort of casteism by insisting on the priesthood being confined to the *Tribarna*, namely, Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishya. For understanding this ideology we have to look to the times when Jainism was born and particularly when Mahavira Vardhamana, the 24th and last *Tirthanakara*, propagated the creed in different parts of India. At that time the Brahmanas were the power behind the kings who were non-Brahmans. The Brahmins gave an inferiority complex to manual labour and, at the same time, most of them were idlers, while only a small percentage took to learning. They had become the self-appointed guardians and interpreters of *Sruti* and *Smriti* (revelation and tradition). Mahavira Vardhamana was, however, not an ardent supporter of Brahmana supremacy, as he declared that men of the other two higher castes, namely, Kshatriya and Vaishya, could also officiate

as priests. Thus he was, in a way, both a defender of casteism and also an idealist who really dug at the root of casteism.

Jainism was a religion of the poor, as well, for it was a religion preaching the equality of men. Mahavira preached for all—probably more for the poor—and it may be recalled that, despite being physically assaulted in *Rarh Desha* by the ruffians, he stayed on there for months preaching his gospel. Today the Jain images are lying scattered in a large number of villages in that district, neglected and often worshipped as Hindu deities.* In this manner, as C.J. Shah in his *Jainism in North India* has observed, his “world-embracing sympathy led him to proclaim this method of self-culture and holy living to the suffering humanity, and he invited the poor and lowly to end their suffering by cultivating brotherly love and universal peace. The Brahmin and the Sudra, the high and the low, were the same in his eyes. All could equally effect their salvation by a holy life, and he invited all to embrace his catholic religion of love. It spread slowly as Christianity spread in Europe in early dates—until Srenika, Kunika, Chandra-gupta, Sampriti, Kharavela and others embraced Jainism during the first few glorious centuries of Hindu rule in India”.

Mahavira Vardhamana, by preaching that every one could lead a life of purity, of right conduct and love and thus achieve his salvation, wanted to usher in a casteless and classless society. Hatred or any inferior motives regulating caste distinction is outside the pale of Jainism. Mahavira always preached that *Ghrina* (hatred) should be completely eschewed.

* *Jainism in Bihar* by P. C. Roy Choudhury, 1956. This was the Purulia district now in West Bengal.

It is not necessary to go into the differences of the two sections of Jains—the Svetambars and the Digambars. Briefly speaking, the Svetambars believe in *Sabastra Mukti*, that women can attain salvation, recognise *Sabastra Guru* and hold that in the *Kaivalya* condition Mahavira had illness. The Svetambar Jains hold that Mahavira Swami married and ruled and had a daughter. They are also of the view that the 19th *Tirthankara* was a lady Mallahkumari.

But the Digambars believe in *Digambar Mukti* and they do not admit that because of certain deformities peculiar to their sex, women can attain *Mukti* in the present life, but can do so in a future birth. However, they can, at the same time, observe the great vows and lead a true Jain life. The Digambar Jains do not recognise *Sabastra Guru*. They hold that Mahavira Swami was a *Bal Brahmachari* and he had never married, nor did he have any *raj*. They do not believe that in the *Kaivalya* condition Mahavira Swami had any illness. They hold that the 19th *Tirthankara* was a male and his name was Mallinath. The two sects also differ as to the birth-place of Mahavira Swami.

According to the Svetambars, Kundaligram in Monghyr district is the birth-place of Mahavira. According to the Digambars, Kundalipur near Nalanda is his birth-place. There is a third school of Jains who now claim Vaishali in Muzaffarpur district as the birth-place of Mahavira Swami. It appears that certain sections of both the Svetambar and the Digambar sects accept Vaishali to be the birth-place of Mahavira Swami. Incidentally, all these three places that are taken to be the birth-place of Mahavira, are in Bihar.

Many Jain images in different parts of India are mistaken to be Buddhist images. It has been observed: “The Jain images are mostly either in *padmasan* or *khad-*

gasan mudras. They are also characterised by *nasagraha-drishti* and by *veetaraga mudra*. The gaze is fixed to the top of the nose and there is an air of sublime detachment. The Digambar Jain images are characterised by their nudity and the left palm is on right palm and no offerings of jewels or ornaments are made. The Svetambar Jain images are conspicuous by loin-cloth, the right palm being on left palm and offerings of jewels and ornaments are made.

“Both the Svetambar and the Digambar Jains agree on the concepts of *Shristi*, *Anadi*, *Nitya*, *Kriya*, *Kanda* and that renunciation leads to salvation and *Mukti* is obtained by *Samyak Darshan*, *Samyak Jnana* and *Samyak Charitra*.”*

A remarkable feature of Jainism is that, while Buddhism and its philosophy had been assailed by the later orthodox Hindu preachers, Jainism was hardly ever touched. Despite internal schism, the creed never died. Jainism is still a living cult in India and has its devotees in other countries as well. Probably, the sources of the strength and persistence of Jainism are in a continuous flow of active laity that has formed into a harmonious relationship with the preaching order. In this respect the Jains are like the Jews, Parsis and the Quakers.

The passage of time has brought us nearer to the teachings of Mahavira. Perfection of man, chastity—sexual and moral—for the individuals and nations were preached and salvation was extolled as the birth-right of men. To-day we see for ourselves how very apt these teachings are.

Parasnath temple is a typical example of what Jain *sadhus* and the laity can do for their religion. The great and beautiful structures of marble at the top of the hill stand as a grand monument of Jainism. Parasnath temple is also a typical example of what Percy Brown mentions,

* *Jainism in Bihar* by P. C. Roy Choudhury, page 14.

in his *Indian Architecture* as "a temple city". It would be apt to quote the following observations from that book.

"These temple-cities, or *tirthas* (places of pilgrimage) are laid out on no specific plan, the buildings being arranged on such level spaces as the contours of the hill naturally provide. In one or two instances they consist of several hundreds of edifices, but contain no human habitation, as except for an occasional watchman, they are at night-time entirely deserted, the gods in their shrines being left to the protection of their own sanctity. Each *tirtha* represents centuries of devotion which found expression in temple-building, and they form the central objects of pilgrimages and festivals at frequent intervals. Although many of the temples may seem complicated in appearance, each is designed, as a rule, on the principles common to the religious architecture of the late medieval period, the elaborations being due to such factors as the addition of numerous supplementary shrines, to the application of double stories, and to the practice of imposing pillared cloisters around all the larger examples. In the style of the individual buildings one variation found only in Jain temples is noticeable, and that is the frequent production of a class of temple known as *chaumukh* or four-faced. This form of structure owes its shape to the particular character of the image it enshrines, as instead of a single figure facing one way and therefore requiring only one entrance to the cell, the *chaumukh* is a quadruple image, or a group of four images, either of one *Tirthankar* or of four different *Tirthankars* placed back to back so as to face the four cardinal points. Such a plan necessitated a shrine chamber with four doorways, a structural alteration which affected very considerably the design of the sanctuary, converting this into a cruciform compartment with an opening on each side. This again influenced the shape of the *vimana* as a whole, a

circumstance of which the Jain builders took full advantage in their treatment of the exterior of this temple type”.

Dr. Hooker, who ascended the hill in February, 1848, wrote thus of the view of Parasnath from near Taldanga in Manbhum :

“As the sun rose Parasnath appeared against the clear grey in the form of a beautiful broad cone, with a rugged peak of a deeper grey than the sky. It is a remarkably handsome mountain, sufficiently lofty to be imposing, rising out of an elevated country, the slope of which upward to the base of the mountain, though imperceptible, is really considerable; and it is surrounded by lesser hills of just sufficient elevation to set it off. The atmosphere, too, of these regions, is peculiarly favourable for views; it is very dry at this season, but still the hills are clearly defined, without the harsh outline so characteristic of air. The skies are bright, the sun powerful; and there is an almost imperceptible haze that seems to soften the landscape, and keeps every object in true perspective.”

The view from the hill itself he described as follows:

“The view from the saddle of the crest was beautiful, but the atmosphere too hazy. To the north were ranges of low wooded hills, and the course of the Barakar and Ajay rivers, to the south lay a flatter country with lower ranges, and the Damodar river, its all but waterless bed snowy white from the exposed granite blocks with which its course is strewn. East and west the several sharp ridges of the mountain itself are seen; the western considerably the highest. Immediately below, the mountain flanks appear clothed with impenetrable forest, here and there interrupted by rocky eminences, while to the south the Grand Trunk Road shoots across the plains, like a white thread as straight as an arrow, spanning here and there the beds of the mountain torrents.”

Portions of the hill have been used, since the British occupation of the district, as a sanatorium for British troops; but the confined space and absence of water made it unsuitable for such use. According to the version of the Jains, when construction of the sanatorium started they lodged an emphatic protest with the Government of India on the ground that the sacredness of the hill was likely to be violated and that it would offend the sentiments of the Jains. Accordingly, the idea of establishing a sanatorium was abandoned not merely because of confined space and absence of water, but also in deference to the sentiments of the Jains, and the building which was constructed was later utilised as a Dak Bungalow.

Parasnath is the "Marang Buru" or the hill deity of the Santals of Hazaribagh, Manbhum, Bankura and Santal Parganas and each year they assemble at the period of the full moon in *Baisakh* from those districts and celebrate a religious hunt for three days; after which a great tribal session is held for the trial of charges against *manjhis* and *parganaits* and of other grave matters which pertain to the outcasting of individuals. The entry of this custom in the record-of-rights, which was prepared in 1911, and of the similar right of the *Ghatwars* prompted the institution of a suit by the Swetambar Jains to have it declared that no such custom exists. That suit was dismissed by the Judicial Commissioner and an appeal, preferred against his order, has been rejected by the High Court. The case went up to the Privy Council and it was held that the Santals have the customary right of hunting on the Parasnath Hill.

The two most prominent of these sects are the Swetambars and Digambars. The word Digambar means 'sky-clad', an euphemism for 'nude'; and apparently their habit of taking their food naked and of not decorating the im-

ages in their temples with any kind of ornament, are survivals of a wider practice, to which they owe their name. The Svetambars or the 'white-clad', on the other hand, take their meals clothed and adorn the images of the *Tirthankaras* with a profusion of golden ornaments. They concede that women, too, can obtain *nirvana* and they hold that an ascetic should use cloth to guard the mouth and a brush for sweeping away insects, differing in all these matters from the Digambars. At present they control the ceremonial at the temples and shrines on the hill and, once the pilgrim has crossed the boundary just above Madhuban, he must place himself in their hands, even though he be a Digambar. This has excited great bitterness between the sects, each of which is making strenuous attempts to obtain a more assured position on the hill. So far, the Svetambars have had greater success in this regard, for they have for some years enjoyed a lease by which they are entitled to build their shrines wherever they choose on the hill; but, unfortunately for them, the High Court declared the lease to be void. The matter was litigated again in the Hazaribagh Courts and in the Patna High Court and ultimately a compromise has been arrived at. Now both the sects have freedom to worship at the temple without any hitch.

The old District Gazetteer of Hazaribagh states thus: "The hill is included in the old geographical division of Kharagdiha, and is shown in the map prepared by Rennell in 1779 as lying entirely within Palganj *gadi*. Recently, however, the owner of the Nawagarh *gadi* in Manbhum obtained a decree in a Civil Court that he was entitled to the southern face of the hill and the question is now on appeal before the High Court. A further complication in the present tangle has arisen out of a proposal made a few years ago to build houses for Europeans on the hill. The

Jains disliked this and offered to buy the hill from the Encumbered Estates Department, which was at the time in charge of the estate of the *Tikait* of Palganj and the Digambars claim that in the subsequent negotiations they were given a definite and enforceable promise of sale and this claim they are prosecuting by a civil suit. To add completeness to this maze of litigation which is financed by the subscriptions of the faithful throughout India the two sects have a suit pending between themselves regarding the manner of worship to be observed at the shrines on the hill''.

The above may have been true at the time the District Gazetteer was last written. The hill was bought by the Jains from the Wards and Encumbered Estates, and the dispute with the occupant of the Nawagarh *gadi* in Manbhūm has been settled amicably long ago. There is at present no complication about any proposal to build houses for Europeans on the hills. Subsequently to the purchase of the hill by the Jains from the Wards and Encumbered Estates, there arose differences between the trustees of the Digambar and Svetambar temples as to the rites to be observed at the shrines on the hill. The dispute was decided in title suit by the High Court in favour of the Svetambars and their trustees are in charge of the management of the hill. Recently, under the Land Reforms Act, the management of the hill was notified to be taken over by the Government. The members of the Jain community pressed their case for release of the hill from Government management, on the ground that this would hurt the religious susceptibility of the Jains.

It has been stated that the oldest date borne by any of the buildings on or below the hill is A.D. 1765, and it is believed that none of these edifices is of much earlier age. The pediment and a body of the temple are ornamen-

ted with arched entrances. The officers of the Archaeological Department, who have examined them, have found nothing of special interest. The main building on the hill is a temple on the south-east side of the summit, which has been described in 1827 as follows:

“About three quarters of a mile on the southern descent from first *math* at which I arrived, and snugly sheltered from the northern and western storms, stands the principal and the most beautiful of all the temples in this neighbourhood. The same observation that I have made regarding the mixture of Musalman and Hindu architecture in the temples of Madhuban will apply to this *mandir*, which, as I descended through the thick jungle upon it, looked more like a Muhammadan *dargah* than a building belonging to the original people of Hindustan. Government have deferred the actual taking over the charge of the management of the hill and the representation of the Jains is still under consideration. The pediment and body of the temple were ornamented with arched entrances between single pillars, such as are common in the larger houses of the Hindus; but above this all was in Muhammadan fashion. Five handsome fluted domes, one large one in the centre, surrounded with four small ones each forming the roof of a corresponding apartment, seemed too heavy a crown for the edifice from which they rose. These domes were well ornamented and were pointed with those spires composed of golden or brazen balls and ending in arrow heads, which are generally to be seen shooting out from the tops of minarets. The four sides of the building are alike, but to mark the principal approach, a large *chabutra* lies in front of the eastern archways.

“On entering the centre and holy chamber of this temple it is impossible to avoid being impressed with the simple beauty of the place. The pavement is composed of

fine slabs of blue veined marble and on a white marble pediment opposite to the entrance five very beautiful idols of the Jain *Tirthankaras* sit in dignity waiting for the prayers of their disciples, which are rendered more deep toned by the echoing influences of the domes that form the ceiling of the sanctuary. The centre figure, which represents Parasnath as a naked figure sitting cross-legged in an attitude of abstract meditation, is cut out of a beautiful piece of black marble. It measures between three and four feet high, as sitting, and is remarkably graceful idol, in full preservation. The other four are each about two feet and a half high, all of them of white marble and one of them wearing the same hood which adorns the head of the central image, as the peculiar ornament of Parsvanath. On the pedestal of each idol the same inscription appears that Shuogal Chand Jagat Seth erected it in A.D. 1765. The chamber which constitutes this sanctuary is about twenty feet square and between thirty and forty feet high to the centre of the dome. There are no ornaments beyond those I have described, but the marble pavement, pedestal and idols are the handsomer for being unadorned. Of the four smaller apartments at the corner two remain empty and the other two contain each seventeen idols of all sizes (but all of the Jain form and posture) ranged along a ledge in the wall. These appear to have been left at will by pilgrims who have been anxious to consecrate their household gods at the shrine of Parasnath.

“It is held to be necessary that every *gumti* or *tuk* should be visited and receive an offering at the hands of each pilgrim and as many of the peaks are several *kos* distant from the *math* of Kuntnath to which the ascending path arrives, and as some of them can only be mounted by climbing, this is indeed a penance of extreme labour and fatigue. The length and tediousness of this duty is in-

creased by their strict forbearance from committing any kind of impurity whatever within the holy precincts and as it is their custom to eat by daylight only to avoid incurring the destruction of the smallest insect. Several excursions to the summit are necessary for the accomplishment of the pilgrimage. Each *gumti* is a solid pile of brickwork, varying in height and size according to the facility its station afforded to the builders. The largest does not exceed eight feet in height and the same in length and breadth, while some appeared not to be larger than one-fourth of these dimensions. In each of the buildings is a small recess, on the flat of which is marked the print of a foot revered as the *charan* or last foot mark upon each of the *Tirthankara* whose name is engraved beneath. . . . The visits and salutations to several *charans* on the peaks are concluded by a more deliberate adoration at the temple of Parsvanath. After concluding the duties on the mountain, those who desire to leave no claim to a sanctified character unadvanced perform a circuit round the base, starting from Madhuban, to which they again return traversing a circle of at least thirty miles. From this place the greater part of the pilgrims depart for the other temples at Pawapuri in Bihar and Champapuri near Bhagalpur''. (Quoted in Lister's *Hazaribagh Gazetteer*.)

The highest peak of Parasnath is covered by a spiralled temple which could be seen from miles away. It is known that this temple has replaced at least two of the old shrines destroyed by lightning. The temple is surrounded by a collection of white-washed edifices, gay with flags and the golden ball of the cupolas could be seen from the various stages of the ascent. Parasnath Hill is visited by thousands of Jain pilgrims and visitors of other denominations. Considering the heavy traffic, the tourist facilities afforded are rather poor. Excepting a few *Dharamsalas* and Rest Houses

set up through the munificence of Jain philanthropists and a very ordinary Rest Bungalow with only basic furniture and no food arrangements, there are no hotels where one could stay more comfortably. The lavish gift of nature to the hill, the halo of the religious sanctity around the place, the good old Grand Trunk Road and the Eastern Railway lines afford ample opportunities for developing Parasnath into a first-class tourist centre. Incidentally, Parasnath Hill is a pilgrimage for the botanist and the lover of avifauna.

9. VAISALI

Vaisali was once a prosperous town and the centre of Jain culture. It has declined in glory considerably but attempts are being made to revive it.

Vaisali is a village connected by road with the headquarters of a sub-division of Hajipur, Muzaffarpur district, as well as with Muzaffarpur, the district headquarters town. It is 22 miles from Hajipur and 30 miles from Muzaffarpur by road. The nearest railway station is Hajipur. Passenger buses run from both Muzaffarpur and Hajipur to Vaisali. Horse-drawn ekkas and rickshaws are also available at Hajipur station.

Vaisali is an ancient place. It finds mention in the *Ramayana*. The legend is that the Ikshvaku queen Alambusha had a son Visala, who had founded the city named Visalapuri. Sumati, who had played host to Sri Ramchandra, was one of the descendants of Visala. The Puranas also mention King Visala. Sri Ramchandra is supposed to have passed one night here while going to Janakpur.

During the time of Vardhamana Mahavira, the 24th of the Jain *Tirthankaras* and a contemporary of Lord Buddha, Vaisali was a prosperous place. Mahavira Vardhamana had visited it. A large section of Svetambar Jains take Vaisali to be the birth-place of Mahavira. But this is not accepted by all the Svetambar Jains. Nor do a large section of Digambar Jains accept Vaisali as the birth-place of Mahavira. In recent years, however, the bulk of the Jains of Bihar and some other places have started treating Vaisali to be the birth-place of Mahavira and *Mahavira Jayanti*—the birth-day of Lord Mahavira—is now celebra

ted with great pomp at Vaisali. According to others, however, Kundaligram in Monghyr district is the birth-place of Mahavira Vardhamana. The third theory is that Mahavira was born at Kundalpur, near Nalanda, in Patna district. Whichever be the place of birth of Lord Mahavira, there is no doubt that Vaisali was the chief seat of Government of the Vrju Lichchavis in Mahavira's time and Vanijagrama, adjoining Vaisali, was the centre of trade and commerce.

While describing the historicity of this glorious place, Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji in his article "Vaisali in Indian History and Culture" mentions: "Vaisali was then at the height of its prosperity with its three districts containing, according to the Tibetan tradition, houses numbering 7000, 14000 and 21000 respectively, and, according to a *Jataka*, was encompassed by three walls with their separate gates and watch-towers. According to the *Mahavastu*, the citizens of Vaisali were distinguished as Adhantara Vaisalikas, the cockneys of the city, and Babira Vaisalikas, the citizens of Greater Vaisali outside the Metropolis and their total number was "twice 84000" i.e. 1,68,000. The early Buddhist work *Mahavagga* describes Vaisali as 'an opulent, prosperous and populous town, with 7707 storeyed-buildings, 7707 *Aramas* and 7707 lotus-ponds,' with its *Rajas* or chiefs also numbering 7707. It will not be quite fair to assume that this description of the city contained in canonical Buddhist texts is imaginary or fictitious. Each of these chiefs decorated the capital with a variety of structures, houses and places, *chaityas* and *viharas*. The Buddhist texts single out eight of its famous *chaityas* which were (i) Udena to the east of Vaisali, (ii) Gotamaka to the south, (iii) Saptamraka (Sattamba) to the west, (iv) Bahuputra on the north, (v) Chapala, (vi) Kapinahya, (vii) Sarandada and (viii) Markatah-

rada. The Lichchavis of Vaisali made a gift of all those shrines to the Buddha.

“There could be no doubt that the personality and preachings of Mahavira rapidly built up Vaisali as a centre of Jainism and of the spiritual discipline and asceticism upon which it was based. Vaisali thus achieved an early reputation in the religious world of India for its teachers devoted to the practice of uttermost penance and austerity of which Mahavira stood out as the most prominent example”.

This Lichchavi capital of Vaisali was commonly known as Basarh and continued in comparative oblivion till 1903 when the Department of Archaeology sponsored a series of excavations. Dr. Bloch carried out the first excavations from 1903 and this work was continued by Dr. Spooner in 1912. Through the efforts of the Archaeological Department a large number of terracotta figurines, pieces of pottery, inscribed seals etc. have been found at Vaisali. Dr. Bloch found over 700 clay sealings and about 1100 seal impressions of approximately 120 varieties, which were mostly of unbaked clay, and went back to the days of the Guptas in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries A.D. The scripts on the seals are said to be of the Gupta type, but the emblems on them have no Buddhist symbols. Most of the seals refer to officials, guilds, corporations, temples and private individuals. The seals are preserved in the Patna Museum.

Among the types of pottery found in different strata, there are wares, jar, bottle-necked jar, cooking pans, lamp, perforated lid with figure of peacock etc.

In the course of the last ten years a great attempt has been made by the Jains and others, liberally helped by the State Government, to revive the glory of Vaisali. Excavations are being carried out and many more relics have been found. A fine modern temple has been built, with an image

of Mahavira Vardhamana installed therein. The temple is artistically erected and has started attracting pilgrims. On *Mahavira Jayanti* day thousands of pilgrims offer *puja* here. Vaisali was selected as the site for rearing an institution for the study of Jainology. An ancient Jain image found in the recent excavations has been preserved. A small museum has been sponsored at Vaisali itself and a large number of finds are kept there. On the occasion of *Mahavira Jayanti* a big *mela* is held which is attended by thousands of people. Cultural meetings are a usual feature of the *Mahavira Jayanti* celebrations.

Vaisali is also important for the Buddhists. Buddha visited the place thrice. It was at Vaisali that the second great Buddhist Council was held. While sojourning at Vaisali, Buddha permitted the nuns to enter the *Sangh*, against his personal wishes, at the request of Ananda, his favourite disciple, and his foster mother, Maha Prajapati, became the first Buddhist nun at Vaisali.

Raja Visala's *garh* is still to be seen as a huge mound and the excavations have yielded great results as already mentioned. It was General Cunningham who, after visiting Vaisali, gave the first authoritative description. The excavations in 1904 discovered remains of masonry buildings at every place explored. It was considered that the ruined buildings go back to at least 300 A.D. or still older times. There were ashes and fragments of burnt wood and it was assumed that this place was also sacked and plundered. It is remarkable that about 700 seals were discovered in one single room. One of the seals bears the mark of a *Linga* with a *Trisul* on each side. Tirabhukti, the ancient name of Tirhut, is inscribed on two of the seals. The finds discovered by Dr. Spooner, Superintendent of Archaeological Survey in the Eastern Circle, are preserved in the Patna Museum.

In 1945 a Vaisali *Sangh* was organised to revive the ancient glory of Vaisali. The *Sangh* has taken great interest in cleaning up the large tank, know as the *Bawan Pokhar*, in the village. Several statues have been dug out of this tank. Local tradition has it that there were 52 tanks, and that Basarh was the residence of the Puranic Bali Raja. Vishnu appeared here in the fourth incarnation in the shape of a dwarf, and asked Bali Raja for as much ground as he could cover with his three feet. Two of his feet covered heaven and earth, and the third he placed on the head of Bali Raja and sent him hurtling into hell as punishment for his great pride. The villagers believe in the legend that the *Bawan Pokhar* was the scene of this occurrence.

It may also be mentioned that within three miles of Vaisali there is an Asoka pillar, without any inscription, at Kaluha village. The pillar is a monolith supporting a square pedestal on which a lion is carved in stone. The shaft in the single block of polished stone stands 22 feet high above the ground and the remainder is below the ground. A finely executed lion with a snarling mouth sits facing north at the top of the pillar. There are some Buddhist statues nearby, of which one is a large image of a seated Buddha with a crown and necklace. There are also some mounds in the neighbourhood. All these appear to prove that Kaluha was a part of Vaisali.

The modern temple erected near the tank *Bawan Pokhar* is expected to revive the ancient glory of Vaisali.

10. NALANDA

The village Nalanda in the district of Patna has a very hoary history recalling the days of Mahavira and Buddha. Nalanda is 55 miles south-east of Patna and seven miles north of Rajgir, the ancient Rajagriha. Nalanda is now served by a branch section of the Eastern Railway from Bakhtiarpur station on the Howrah-Mughalsarai route. Nalanda is also well connected by an all-weather road with Patna via Bakhtiarpur and several passenger buses run daily from Patna to Rajgir via Nalanda and back. A number of taxis are also available at Bakhtiarpur railway station, which is at a distance of 25 miles from Nalanda. Ekkas and rickshaws are available at Nalanda. There is an Inspection Bungalow and some *dharamshalas* at Nalanda. The visitors can also stay at Rajgir, only seven miles away, where a large number of rest houses, dormitories, *dharamshalas*, besides private houses are available on rent.

A large number of ancient Buddhist establishments, *stupas*, *chaityas*, temples and monastery sites have been excavated and they show that this was one of the most important Buddhist centres of worship and culture.

Regarding the historicity of Nalanda, we read in Jaina texts that Mahavira Vardhamana spent as many as fourteen rainy seasons in Nalanda. Pali Buddhist literature, too, has ample references to Nalanda, which used to be visited by Lord Buddha. During the days of Mahavira and Buddha, Nalanda was apparently a very prosperous temple city, a great place of pilgrimage and the site of a celebrated university.

It is said that Asoka gave offerings to the *chaitya* of Sariputra at Nalanda and erected a temple there. Taranath mentions this and also that Nagarjuna, the famous Mahayana philosopher of the second century A.D., studied at Nalanda. Nagarjuna later became the high-priest there. Suvishnu, a Brahmana contemporary of Nagarjuna, was supposed to have built 108 temples at Nalanda to prevent the decline of both the Hinayana and the Mahayana schools of Buddhism. Aryadeva, a philosopher of the Madhyamika school of Buddhism (Fourth Century A.D.), Asanga, a Buddhist philosopher of the Yogachara school (Fifth Century A.D.) and Vasubandhu (brother of Asanga) were actively associated with Nalanda.

The excavations at Nalanda, according to the archaeologists, do not, however, reveal anything substantial to suggest the occupation of the site before the Guptas. The copper plates of Samudragupta and the coin of Kumargupta, discovered in the course of the excavations, are the earliest datable finds. According to Hiuen Tsang, one Sakraditya built a monastery at Nalanda and several of his successors, namely, Buddhagupta, Tathagatagupta, Baladitya and Vajra built some monasteries nearby. Sakraditya has been identified with Mahendraditya, i.e., Kumaragupta I (c. 413-455). Buddhagupta seems to be the same as Buddhagupta (c. 476-96) and Baladitya seems to be the king who had to encounter the Huna chief, Mihirakula, early in the Sixth Century*. Fa Hien, who visited India in the early Fifth Century, however, does not mention the monastic establishments, although he mentions that the village Nalo was the place of birth and death of Sariputra and had a *stupa*. Nalo may be Nalanda.

Hiuen Tsang had visited Nalanda and had seen an 80' high copper image of the Buddha raised by Purna-

* *Political History of Northern India* by H. C. Ray Choudhury.

varman. Hiuen Tsang also mentions that a large monastery of brass was being built by king Harshavardhana of Kanauj (606-647) at Nalanda. It is said that one thousand monks from Nalanda were present at the royal congregation at Kanauj. Nalanda was a flourishing university teaching hundreds of students when Hiuen Tsang visited the place.

Hiuen Tsang's account mentions a number of monasteries and temples at Nalanda. He studied philosophy, logic, grammar, medicine and *Atharvaveda* at Nalanda university. He had very high praise for the priests and students and was struck by the great fervour with which discussions used to be held from morning till night. Hiuen Tsang was given the name of Mokshadeva at Nalanda.

After Hiuen Tsang as many as 11 Chinese and Korean travellers had visited Nalanda. Another pilgrim who stayed at Nalanda for a considerable time was I Tsang. He mentions that there were more than 3,000 monks at the Nalanda monastery and that they were supported by more than 200 villages gifted by kings. The older monks helped the younger ones. A basic knowledge of the *Tripitakas* was the minimum qualification required of all the monks who came to learn. They were subjected to a severe test before they could be admitted for a course of study. He also mentions about the strict rules of discipline that the monks were observing and that their daily life was regulated by a water clock.

The Pala emperors, who held East India from the 8th to the 12th Century A.D., had also been very sympathetic to Nalanda and they were known to have established a number of other monasteries in Bihar and other Provinces. One of these was Vikramasila, which is generally identified with Patherghatta in Bhagalpur district. The Odantapuri monastery established by the Palas is said to be at the

site of the modern town of Bihar in Patna district only five miles from Nalanda.

The monasteries and the university at Nalanda had a long line of great scholars, some of whom have been mentioned. One of them was Dignaga, the founder of the medieaval school of logic. Dharmapala was another great scholar who had just retired before Hiuen Tsang's arrival. Silabhadra was the head of the Nalanda monasteries when Hiuen Tsang visited the place. Silabhadra was probably succeeded by Dharmakirti, who is said to have defeated Kumaralila, a renowned Brahmanical philosopher. Padmasambhava, a great Buddhist scholar from Nalanda, had visited Tibet. He is credited with having founded the institution of Lamaism in Tibet. Another Nalanda scholar, Santarakshita, had also visited Tibet and stayed on there till his death in 762.

There are also a large number of authoritative epigraphic and literary references which help one in the reconstruction of the history of Nalanda.* Some of the images with inscriptions and copper plates are preserved in the Patna and Nalanda museums. One of the important Nalanda stone inscriptions, discovered in 1863, refers to the eleventh year of Mahipala I. This inscription also refers to the destruction of Nalanda by fire and its subsequent restoration. The excavations made in Nalanda show unmistakable signs of such a fire.

The end of Nalanda as one of the most important and glorious centres of Buddhistic monasteries and temples can only be explained in the context of the wider issue of the decline of Buddhism from India. Bihar and Bengal were the last two provinces where the light of Buddhism was kept aflame with the help of royal patronage. Tantricisim had already crept in as is amply borne out even by some

* *Nalanda* by A. Ghosh (1939).

of the finds in Nalanda. Buddhism was already on the decline when Hiuen Tsang visited the place. Many of the important centres of early Buddhism were found deserted by him. The preaching of Kumarilabhatta and Sankaracharya in the Eighth Century brought in a revival of Brahmanical Hinduism and a consequent decline of Buddhism, which had already decayed considerably. The Muslim invaders were fanatic against the Buddhist monks and monasteries and their fanaticism led to the final destruction of many of them. The Buddhist laity had almost disappeared and royal patronage had dried up. These two pillars being removed, it was no wonder Buddhism disappeared under the impact of Muslim fanaticism. It is said that Mohammad Bakhtiar Khilji destroyed Nalanda and the monks were either killed or had fled. The great collection of works—the result of centuries of scholastic studies—and manuscripts were burnt or destroyed. According to a Tibetan source, there was a sort of revival after the raid of the Turks and a temple was re-erected at Nalanda. There was a lamentable quarrel between the Brahmana *sadhus* and the Buddhist monks, as a result of which fire was set to the Buddhist temples and the great conflagration that followed destroyed Ratnodadhi, one of the libraries of Nalanda.

Buchanan Hamilton had visited the place in the first quarter of the 19th century and his memoirs show that he had seen a number of Brahmanical and Buddhist images. The place remained neglected till the sixties of the 19th century when General Cunningham identified the place with the ancient Nalanda. To Cunningham we owe a very great debt, as it was he who actually re-discovered Nalanda and thus astounded the world. Cunningham identified the place with the ancient Nalanda mainly on the basis of the distances and the directions given by the

Chinese pilgrims and from the epigraphical evidences of some inscriptions he found.* Broadley carried out some excavations and published a monograph in 1872. The Royal Asiatic Society of London gave a liberal grant and the Archaeological Survey of India, with the help of this grant, took up a well-planned excavation of the site of Nalanda from 1915. Later on, the Archaeological Survey of India did the excavations on its own resources. Great results have been achieved by the activities of the Archaeological Survey of India and a very large number of relics have been found and the monuments were saved from further ruin. Nalanda, as the site of a great temple city at one time, is one of the most important visiting places in India now.

Some references have to be made as to the results of the excavations. There is an archaeological museum at Nalanda and the Custodian of the museum issues admission tickets, for a very small fee, to see the monuments at the site and the museum. The approach road to the site of the excavation leads one through an old passage and on the left is the monastery site No. 1 and on the right monastery sites Nos. 4 and 5. The most imposing and the largest structure is the main *stupa* site No. 3. This *stupa* is a huge square structure standing in the middle of a court surrounded by small votive *stupas*. Five of these *stupas* are extremely well preserved. There is a large stone image of Avalokitesvara. There is also a small shrine with an image believed to be of Nagarjuna. Monastery site No. 1 has been described by Mr. A. Ghosh as the most important of the monastery group, with as many as nine strata and each of them is indicated by concrete pavements and superimposed walls and drains. The monastery contains a number of monk cells with wide verandahs in front. A copper plate

* *Archaeological Survey of India*, Vol. I.

inscription of Dharmapala (c. 770-815), the predecessor of Devapala, and another one of Samudragupta, of the Gupta dynasty (c. 335-75), were found here. Monastery site No. 4 has also a large number of cells as in other monasteries and it is here that a coin of Kumaragupta (A.D. 413-55) was found. Mr. Ghosh mentions: "Traces of the destruction of the lower monastery by fire exist in the burnt wooden door frames and mud mortar of the face masonry of the walls"* . There are in all eleven monastery sites and several *chaitya* sites that have been excavated. All of them have extremely interesting finds for the ordinary visitor, not to speak of the student of archaeology.

For the students of temple history, a ruined stone temple, described in the Archaeological Survey of India Report as Stone Temple site No. 2, is of great importance. We would do well to quote the fine description of it given by Shri Ghosh: "Specially interesting here is the dado of 211 sculptural panels over the moulded plinth. These panels are symmetrically arranged, 20 appearing on each side of the main entrance and 57 in each of the three remaining walls. The pilasters intervening between the panels are decorated with pot-and-foilage design and are surmounted by arches, some of them being pointed. There is a large variety of scenes depicted on them; human figures in various attitudes; household scenes; *kinnaras* playing on musical instruments; Siva and Parvati separately or together; Kartikeya on his peacock; the gods Agni, Kubera, Gajalakshmi; the child Gautama (?) with his writing material; scenes of archery; the *Kachchhapa Jataka*; a human-headed bird with a foliated tail; *makara* designs; a snake charmer; geometrical and scroll patterns etc. The visitor will at once be reminded of the terracotta plaques that are arranged in rows on the different terraces

* *Nalanda* by A. Ghosh (1939).

of the huge temple at Paharpur in the Rajshahi district of Bengal. A striking similarity is noticeable in both the places not only in the subjects depicted but also in their arrangement and style of execution.

“It has been suggested that the sculptures belong to the Sixth or Seventh Century A.D. As the present temple seems to belong to a later date, it is likely that the sculptures originally belonged to an earlier temple and were utilised to decorate the present temple when it was built.

“The row of panels is surmounted by two or, at some places three cornices, which are also decorated at intervals with *chaitya* motif, birds, human heads etc. As one gets up by the staircase facing east, one finds oneself on a *pradakshinapatha* or circumambulation path, upon which rises a shrine showing two different stages of construction”.

In *chaitya* site No. 12 there are two brick shrines and in each there is a colossal stucco statue of the Buddha in *Bhumisparsa mudra*.^{*} To the east of *chaitya* site No. 14 is an inscribed statue of the Buddha again in *Bhumisparsa mudra* and attended by several figures. The pedestal gives the names of the female donor. Nearby there is another colossal image of the Buddha in *Dharma chakra mudra*. Again, close by there is an image of Marichi, the Buddhist goddess of dawn. Marichi has three faces, of which one is that of a pig and there are seven pigs represented on the pedestal. The Buddhist image has been adopted as a Hindu deity by the villagers and is worshipped.

It may be mentioned that a large number of images have also been found in the neighbouring villages of Bargaon, Begampur and Jagdishpur. At Bargaon there is a modern temple of Surya, where we have a collection of a number of Brahmanical and Buddhist images like

^{*} *Bhumisparsa mudra* is the earth-touching pose where the right hand touches the ground with the palm inwards.

Surya, Vishnu, Siva-Parvati, Avalokitesvara, Parvati, etc.* In a tank nearby many Buddhist and Brahmanical gods, including *mukhalingams*, have been found. At Jagdishpur, about two miles to the south-west of the excavations, there is a large image of Buddha seated under a Bodhi tree and a number of incidents of Lord Buddha's life are sculptured on the top of the back slab which supports this colossal figure of the Buddha.

The Nalanda museum has an exclusive collection of images of the Pala, Gupta and other periods. The images are either Buddhistic or Brahmanical and several of them show clear Tantric influence. Some of the images are in bronze. The Buddha images are of various types and so are the images of the Bodhisattvas. There are some images of common types of Manjushri Bodhisattvas. There are also finely executed images of Jambhala, the Buddhist god of wealth, Tara Prajnaparamita, Marichi, Hariti, Sarasvati, Aparajita, etc. Brahmanical images include those of Vishnu, Balarama, Siva-Parvati, Surya, Durga, Mahishasuramardini, Revanta, Ganesha, etc.

The museum has also a collection of copper plates, stone inscriptions, brick inscriptions, ceiling plaques, coins, carved bricks, pottery and small heaps of burnt rice. Nalanda naturally attracts thousands of visitors who draw great inspiration from the surroundings and the findings and go back with nostalgic memories of what a great temple-city Nalanda once was.

* There are very few old Surya temples in Bihar and the construction of this modern temple of Surya here and another near Arrah is an interesting fact.

11. PATAN DEVI

Patna is one of the oldest cities in India. Very few cities in India have had so many names as this hoary city. The well-known ancient names of Patna were Pataliputra, Kusumapura and Pushpapura. The Greeks called it Palibothra. The Chinese called the place as Pa-lin-fou. During the later Muslim period it came to be known Azimabad.

Pataliputra was referred to in Emperor Asoka's Girnar Rock Edict No. V and in his Sarnath Pillar Edict. The name is spelt in the Rock Edict as Pataliputa, undoubtedly the Prakrit form of Pataliputra. The capital of Magadha was at first at Giribrajpur or Rajagriha (the modern Rajgir) and then it was transferred to Pataliputra during the reign of Udayin, son of Darsaka.

Pataliputra or Patna has been sanctified by the glories around Gautama Buddha and Mahavira Vardhamana. The city has been referred to in Patanjali's *Mahabhashya*, Chanakya's *Artha Shastra*, memoirs of Fahien and Hiuen Tsang. Pataliputra saw a great council of Jain scholars under the guidance of Sthula Bhadra; and this council collected the Jain sacred books, consisting of the 11 *Angas* and the 14 *Purvvas*, the latter of which are collectively called the 12th *Anga*. South of the Gulzarbagh railway station, within the Patna City limits, there is still a temple of Sthula Bhadra. Fahien had visited the city and his description of the buildings of King Asoka has been substantiated by the excavations at Kumhrar, about one mile from Patna Junction railway station, by Dr. Spooner a few decades back.

Patna has seen the vicissitudes of the Sisunaga Dynasty (600 B.C.—372 B.C.), Nanda Dynasty (372 B.C.—323 B.C.), Maurya Dynasty (322 B.C.—185 B.C.) and Sunga Dynasty (185 B.C.—73 B.C.). After this, for some time, Pataliputra had come under the rule of the Andhras of the Deccan and it is said for a period its history had become shrouded in obscurity. Then Pataliputra was under the sway of the Gupta Dynasty, 300 A.D.—650 A.D. to be followed by the Palas. The impact of all of these dynastic rules is visible in Patna in some way or the other.

About 1193 A.D. Muhamad, the son of Bukhtiar Khilji, made a clean sweep of Buddhism from Bihar. The Mahommadan period for this area, with Patna as the centre, could be said to start from 1193 A.D. In 1541 A.D. Patna was the provincial capital and Sher Shah built a fort here. Ralph Fitch in 1586 found in the town a growing commerce. Later, from Tavernier's account, we find that in 1665 A.D. Patna was one of the greatest centres of trade in Northern India. Two Englishmen were sent from Agra to Patna in 1620 A.D. to purchase cloth and to establish a business house. In 1632 A.D. a similar move was made from Surat. Patna was selected as the best place for procuring saltpetre when the English established themselves on the Bengal coast. The Portuguese, the Dutch and the French also competed for increasing their trade with Patna as the centre. Some of the relics of the East India Company are still preserved in Patna.

Then came the Maharatta inroads and the attempt of Ali Vardi Khan, the undisputed master of Bihar and Bengal, to fortify Patna against the inroads of the Maharattas. The next event of importance is Siraj-ud-daula's rebellion in 1750 A.D., the interference by the English and a number of skirmishes and open battles. Shah Alam,

on being defeated at Manpur near Gaya in 1767, was escorted to Patna and entertained there. Shah Alam was proclaimed the Emperor of India and Mir Kashim Ali was made the Nawab of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Patna next saw the differences between the English and Mir Kashim and Mir Kashim's ruthless massacre of the English prisoners by the hands of a Swiss, Walter Reinhardt, nicknamed Somru. The graves are still to be seen in Patna. After this a British force under Major Adams laid siege to Patna and on the 6th November 1763 Patna was stormed and taken. With the decisive battle of Buxar on 23rd October, 1764, the British became the undisputed masters of the lower provinces of Bengal.

Patna is a great place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs as this is the birth-place of Guru Govind Singh. There is a notable Sikh temple known as Harmandir. Patna is also memorable in the history of the Roman Catholics as it is from Patna that Roman Catholic fathers went to Tibet and Nepal in the 16th Century.

Patna saw the great insurrection of 1857 when the Divisional Commissioner William Tayler publicly hanged a few Wahabees to put down the insurrection. Patna became more important as the administrative headquarters and, when the new province of Bihar and Orissa was created in 1911, Patna was naturally chosen as the first capital. A new area was added to the city which is still known as New Patna. This area has fine arboriculture, roads and houses. After the separation of Orissa in 1936, Patna has continued in importance as the capital of the province of Bihar. From 1911 onwards the tempo of urbanisation has quickened and Patna became the seat of a High Court, Universities, a very large Secretariat for the Government and numerous institutions. Patna is now accessible by train, roadways, waterways and airways.

Patna has got wonderful river-front with Ganga flowing nearby. It has an expanding importance as the State of Bihar has got unique industrial potential having very large mineral belts etc.

It may be mentioned that very few cities in India have had a more chequered career, which is borne out by ample references and concrete relics right from the pre-historic period. It is interesting to trace the name of the place Patna, which is supposed to have been derived from two temples that exist in Patna. The temples are known as Bari Patan Devi and Choti Patan Devi.

The name Patna is popularly believed to be derived from these two Patan Devi Temples. The Bari Patan Devi temple is located at Maharajganj, about six miles east from Patna Junction railway station of the Eastern Railway. Gulzarbagh railway station is at a distance of half a mile. The Choti Patan Devi temple is located at Patna City Chowk, about two miles from Patna City railway station of the Eastern Railway. Rickshaws, horse-drawn ekkas, taxis, etc. are available at Patna, Gulzarbagh and Patna City railway stations.

The following are the legends regarding the temples:—

Once Prajapati Daksha celebrated *Brihaspati Yajna* and had invited every god to his *Yajna* but left out Shiva, his own son-in-law. Sati, the wife of Lord Shiva, on learning that her husband had not been invited to her father's *Yajna*, went to her father's home. When Sati found no seat allotted to her husband there, she felt mortified and put an end to her life. Lord Shiva at once came to know of this and in his great anger and sorrow took her dead body on his shoulder and began to perform *tandava* dance round the *Triloka* (three worlds). The Gods were horror-struck and requested Lord Vishnu to intervene. Vishnu cleverly followed the dancing Shiva and started cutting

the dead body of Sati to pieces with his *Chakra*. Wherever the major limbs of the body of Sati fell the places became *Mahapithas*. The places where the minor limbs fell came to be known as *Upapithas*.

There is a tradition fondly believed that some portion of the right thigh of Sati and the *pat* (cloth) fell near Maharajganj and Chowk, from which Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Maha Saraswati came into existence. It is also believed that the names of the goddesses Bari Patan Devi and Choti Patan Devi are derived from the *pat* which fell at Maharajganj and Chowk. It has been mentioned in *Tantra Churamani* that the right thigh of Sati fell in Magadha and it is supposed that the places where it fell are Maharajganj and Chowk where we now have the temples of Bari Patan Devi and Choti Patan Devi. But many do not treat Patna as a *Mahapithasthan* and say that only a portion of Sati's cloth (*pat*) had fallen at two places in Patna. Some, however, doubt whether the name Patna has been derived from the temples. According to them the name is derived from *patan* which means a town and Patna was a big place of export and import.

In the temple of Bari Patan Devi the three small images of the three goddesses viz., Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Maha Saraswati are the legendary three presiding guardian deities who protected Putraka, the founder of Pataliputra, as is mentioned in *Kathasarit Sagar*. In a tank near the temple was found a peculiar stone image. It has been kept in a niche in the eastern verandah of the temple and is now worshipped as a goddess.

The temple of Bari Patan Devi faces to the north. At the entrance of the temple there is a portico of about 15' x 15'. After that there is a room of about 8' x 8' for goddesses namely, Mahakali (12"), Maha Lakshmi (6"), Maha Saraswati (12") and Bhairav (3"). They are in a

standing pose on a *sinhasan*, which is about 4' square, the height being about 7 feet. All the statues are of black stone. They are attired in *sari* except Bhairav. They are with *mukut* (crown).

Choti Patan Devi temple is to the south-east of the famous Sikh temple of Harmandir, which is the site of the birth-place of Guru Govind Singh. It has the same goddesses as in the Bari Patan Devi. It is claimed by some that the *pat* or clothes of Sati, wife of Mahadeva, fell from the sky at this place only. In the northern compound of this temple there is a big image of the Sun-god, though broken into two parts. There are also small images of the Sun-god and of Vishnu and some votive *stupas* in the western verandah of the temple.

Like most of the temples, these temples too, have a number of other images. On the right side of the three goddesses and god (and not in their room) there is a statue of Parvati which is made of stone. It is also believed that this statue is one hundred years old. She is also in the standing pose and located to the north. On the right side of Parvati there is also a small temple of Lord Shiva which was constructed in 1950. This temple is in an open space and there is a courtyard in front of it.

So far as the architecture of the temples is concerned, they have been reconstructed from time to time with liberal use of marble and mosaic slabs. They are in the Brahmanical style. There is no authentic evidence to give us the exact date of the construction of the first temples.

There are no hard and fast rules regarding the timings for visiting the temples. Everybody is allowed to go to the temples from six in the morning, when the morning *arti* takes place, to ten p.m. in the night. Only when the *Maha-naivedya* is being presented on special occasions, the goddesses are screened off from the public view by a sheet.

These two temples are the most important places of local pilgrimage in Patna. Tuesday is a particularly important visiting day for the devotees. On this day the number of devotees visiting the temples is much more. The newly-weds and the new-born babies are brought to these temples and the blessings of the goddesses are sought. This is a widely prevalent practice and at least a few dozens of newly married couples or babies are seen every morning. Promises (*manatas*) are frequently made before the deities and gifts are offered, *saris* being the common offerings. Goats and pigeons are also offered.

Regarding the worship of the Patan Devi goddesses, the *District Gazetteer of Patna* has observed:—

“Of the more orthodox deities of the Hindu Pantheon the most popular is Kali, whose chief temple is in Patna City at Kalisthan near Mangle’s tank. In her various forms she is regarded as the tutelary goddess of the City, and there are two old shrines there dedicated to her under the name of Patan Devi, one in the Chowk and the other in Alamganj. Under the form of Sitala she is worshipped by all Hindus, from Brahmans down to Doms, wherever there is an epidemic of small-pox. When anyone is attacked by the disease, a small piece of ground near the patient’s bed is smeared with cowdung and a fire is lit there, on which *ghee* is poured and incense burnt. A *mali* is called in, who sings songs in honour of Sitala, while the patient is given sweet-meats and fanned with a twig of the *neim*, which is her favourite tree”.* This custom is still prevalent.

As in many other places, a *mela* is also held near these temples at the time of *Vijayadashmi*. On *Saptami*, *Ashtami* and *Navami* during the *mela* about 600 persons come to offer prayers daily at either of the two temples. Visitors generally bring sweets, garlands and fruits to offer to the

* *District Gazetteer of Patna* (1924).

deities. The priest of the temple takes some quantity of the *prasad* and returns the rest to the devotees and marks their forehead with *rori* (red powder). The devotees also give some money to the priest as *dakshina*.

As regards the routine of the rituals, the deity is daily bathed morning and evening and this is followed by offerings of *prasad* (fruits and sweetmeats etc.) and *arti* with the usual reciting of hymns by the priest, accompanied by the ringing of bells.

12. ARANYA DEVI

There are a number of towns and cities in India which have derived their name from a temple the deity of which is commonly believed to be the presiding deity of the place. The name Bombay is derived from Mumba Devi while Patna, the capital of Bihar, is named after Patan Devi whose temple is located at Gulzarbagh, an area of Patna. Arrah is the headquarters of Shahabad district. Arrah is served by a railway station of the Eastern Railway between Patna and Mughalsarai. Arrah is located at a distance of 36 miles from Patna, with which it is linked by an all-weather road from Sasaram, a sub-divisional headquarters of Shahabad district. Sasaram is 60 miles from Arrah and the Grand Trunk Road from Calcutta to Delhi runs via Sasaram. Arrah has also another excellent road running to Buxar, which is another sub-divisional headquarters of Shahabad at a distance of 42 miles from Arrah.

The name Arrah is derived from the temple of Aranya Devi, which is located in the Chowk area. It is two miles from the railway station and about half a mile from the court buildings. Rickshaws, horse-drawn ekkas and carriages are available at Arrah railway station. Passenger buses from Patna to Varanasi run through Arrah.

The following are the legends of this temple:—

Once Lord Krishna disguised as a hermit and Arjun as a lion went to King Mordhwaj at Arrah, who was renowned for his generosity. The hermit demanded human flesh for his lion saying that the lion did not eat animal flesh. The hermit (Lord Krishna) asked for the flesh of

the king's son. The king was puzzled and asked for the consent of his wife. His wife agreed. The hermit asked them to dissect the body of the boy with an *arra* (saw). This was done jointly by the king and the queen. The hermit demanded that the flesh be cooked by them. The king and the queen obeyed him at once. Now they were asked to eat the cooked flesh together with the hermit and the lion. This was also obeyed. The hermit asked the king to call the boy and partake of the meal. The king said that the boy was killed and cooked. The hermit said, "No, call the boy". The king called out the name of the boy. To their sheer amazement and joy, the boy appeared before them in a playful manner. Then Lord Krishna and Arjun gave their real identity and threw away the *arra* (saw) which was used in dissecting the body of the boy. The temple is said to have been erected by King Mordhwaj at the place where the saw fell.

The second mythological version is that the area was covered with forest and the Ganga river was flowing near by and the people built a temple there which was called the temple of Aranya Devi, i.e., goddess of the forest.

The third legend regarding the temple is as follows:—

Like Harischandra, King Mordhwaj was also a great benefactor and charitable-minded. He was a very kind-hearted man—noble, gentle, loving, faithful, honest and simple. His name and fame spread all over India.

The fort of King Mordhwaj was a very big and spacious one covering the present Chowdhariana Mohalla, Jain School area and Devi Asthan sector.

But in spite of so much prosperity and gaiety, the king and the queen were not happy at all because they had no son. And so with intense devotion they began praying to the goddess Durga to bless them with a son. Finally the divine blessing did dawn upon them. The goddess appear-

ed before the king in his dream and gave her blessing, and nine months after a son was born.

The royal boy was a prodigy and provided all the earthly pleasures to his parents. And so the years rolled away.

One night King Mordhwaj saw in his dream goddess Durga asking him to sacrifice his son before her altar. In the dream the divine mandate was that the imperial boy should be made to stand before the altar and the king and the queen, standing on either side of him, were to ply the saw from the boy's head downwards till his body was cut into two halves, with the blood falling before the altar and with no tears trickling down their eyes.

The king took the dream seriously, conveyed it to his royal consort and both agreed to execute the mandate. And the royal prince also did not demur and was happy about the fulfilment of the divine wish. So the trial came. The king and queen applied the saw (*arra*) on the head of the prince and, just as they were starting to ply the saw, the divine mother appeared physically before the scene of sacrifice, blessed the couple and the prince for their devotion to her and disappeared in the blue.

It was in this way that the place which was the scene of the sacrifice came to be known as ARRAH, meaning a saw. It is also believed that the king installed a temple at Arrah which was called Aranya Devi temple.

The temple faces the east. The dome of the temple is round. At the entrance of it there is a courtyard and there are two porticos or verandas to the west and north sides. In the west portico there are three bells. The weight of one bell is 25 seers and the other two are fifteen seers each. The portico of the west side is ten feet by eight feet. There are a Shiva linga and Nandi, a charity box (*gupta dan peti*) for secret offer by the visiting devotees and a well

in the west portico. To the west of the portico there is a space of about 3 feet by 3 feet for the priest and to the west of that place there is the *singhasan* (throne) of two Aranya Devis which are in the standing pose. The *singhasan* of the goddesses is about ten feet high. The statues are of black stone. One statue is three feet high and the other is two feet high. It is said that both are sisters. They are attired in yellow *sari* with flower garlands and *mukuts* on their heads. The *mukuts* are made of paper.

On the left side of Aranya Devi, that is on the north side of the temple, there are the statues of Radha and Krishna. On their left side are the statues of Ram, Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrugna. These were installed by the local businessmen in 1953 A.D. All these statues are made of white stone (marble).

So far as the architecture is concerned, the whole temple has been reconstructed on modern lines. Marble and mosaic work are visible inside the temple. There is no authentic evidence to give us the exact date of the temple.

The priest of the temple is of the Vaishnava sect. His name is Harihar Pandey. This temple is his ancestral property. It is not under any trust. About 500 visitors come here daily to offer prayer. Visitors generally bring *peda*, *mukundana*, *mala* (garland) and fruits to offer to the Devi. The priest of the temple takes some quantity of the *prasad* and returns the rest to the devotees and marks their foreheads with *rori* (red powder). The devotees also give some money to the priest, as *dakshina*.

Regarding the routine of the rituals, the deity is daily bathed morning and evening and this is followed by offerings of *prasad* (fruits and sweatmeats etc.) and *arti* with reciting of hymns by the priest, accompanied with ringing of bells and drums.

Aranya Devi is what is known as a Goddess of *sakama-bhakti*. She is supposed to fulfil whatever desires are expressed before her by the devotee. This goddess being essentially a goddess of the masses, the number of such vows taken and gifts made or other acts performed in fulfilment of such vows is very great. And the forms are varied. Devotees come here and ask for all sorts of things. Some are childless and pray to the goddess to be blessed with one. Others want money, still others desire a particular matrimonial alliance. All come and utter a vow before the goddess that if their desire is fulfilled, they would offer *naivedya*—of bread and cooked sweetened gram. Some people bind themselves to make a pilgrimage to this *kshetra* (place) on some fixed days. Some carry jars filled with water and pour it on the image for a fixed number of days.

13. SHAHABAD

India has quite a few places where there has been a continuity of religious fervour for centuries and the fervour has found concrete shape in the form of temples and places of pilgrimage. There are again some places which were temple-cities and had been very important once but, owing to passage of time and the vicissitudes of history, are now no longer places of pilgrimage and merely contain relics of great importance. There are, too, some places which had become quite famous because of a temple or temples but had gone into oblivion for some time and then revived again. Bodhi Gaya in the Gaya district is an example of this. Shahabad district was once famous for Jain shrines, but for quite some time the Jains lost their foothold there. Again in recent times that district and particularly Arrah, the headquarters town of the district, has become a place of pilgrimage for the Jains all over India.

Shahabad district, with its headquarters town Arrah was once the stronghold of Jainism. This is proved by the find of about twenty images of the *Tirthankaras* Neminath, Rishabhanath and others. The find of the *Kalpavriksha* (tree) with a fine sculpture and the *Dharma Chakra*, excavated from Chausa in the Buxar Sub-division, definitely go to show that Jainism had flourished in this area prior to the sixth century A.D. The *Dharma Chakra* was originated by the *Tirthankara* Rishabhanath and sculptural specimens of the *Dharma Chakra* have been found in India only at such places where Jainism had its great stronghold once. These relics are kept in the Patna Museum now. The age of the relics is put between the Sixth and Ninth Century A.D.

Not much is known of the old Jain temples in this district. It is to be noted, however, that the Jain temples were quite often pulled down and rebuilt, unlike the Hindu temples. However, it may be presumed that Jainism had continued in the district from the 10th Century onwards but probably not as vigorously. The history of Jainism in this district during the middle period is not quite clear. But again we find relics dating to the 16th Century. There are a number of Jain images of the year 1554 in the Chandra Prabhu Chaityalaya built by Shri Chunni Lal. It is clear from the *murtilekha* of *Mul Nayak Pratima* of Chandra Prabhu that it was built in Aram Nagar, in *Samvat* 1562, *Baisakha sudi astami*. There is another image of Chandra Prabhu in the same temple bearing the date of installation as *Baisakha sudi tija*, 1533, and established by Jivaraja Papuriwal. Jivaraja Papuriwal is said to have installed one lakh Jain images throughout India and obviously this image is one of them.

There is a Jain temple in village Masar, 6 miles west of Arrah. Its *murtilekha* bears the date of *Baisakha sudi chaudas*, 1876. Masar is a place of antiquity. This is the *Mo-ho-so-lo* of Hiuen Tsang. That Mahasara was the ancient name of the present Masar is proved by seven inscriptions nearly five hundred years old in the Jain temple at Paras-nath. A large number of Brahmanical images have been found in this village and also the foundations of some old temples. The Jain temple completed in 1819 A.D. has eight Jain statues, on which there are seven inscriptions dating back to 1386 A.D., when some Rathor Jains of Marwar had settled down here. Another figure of Paras-nath has an inscription mentioning that the image was dedicated by Shri Shankar Lal of Aramnagar "during the prosperous English rule of Karusa-desa". This is of interest and shows that Shahabad district was identified with

the ancient Karusha-desa of the Puranas. Arramnagar may have been Arrah.

At present the Jains in Shahabad district are mostly confined to Arrah and Dehri-on-Sone, along with its part known as Dalmianagar. There is also a sprinkling of Jains in Buxar, Sasaram and other places. They are mostly business people. The Jains of Arrah have been remarkably religious-minded and liberal and through their efforts there are now 44 Jain temples in Arrah and its suburb and one in Dalmianagar. This number is really very large for an average district headquarters town. Its temples have made Arrah a place of pilgrimage for the Jains and every year thousands of Jain pilgrims visit Arrah. There are two large well-appointed Jain *dharamshalas* for the Jain pilgrims. The temple authorities are all remarkable for their active spirit of dedication and service. A number of these Jain temples are located in private houses and the doors of these private houses are always thrown open to the religious-minded people without any restriction.

Some of the modern Jain temples in Arrah town deserve much more attention than a passing reference. These temples are mostly replicas of other Jain temples elsewhere and poems in marble have been reproduced at enormous cost to the donors. They attract not only thousands of Jain pilgrims throughout the year but are also visited by men following other creeds and all are creations of the fertile imagination of the architects. Some of them are briefly described below:—

Shri Samaveda Sikhara Mandir

Shri Haraprasad Das Jain of Arrah has built two large buildings in Arrah and spent a fortune in reproducing in marble the famous holy places like Parasnath Hill and the images of the 24 *Tirthankaras* in these

buildings. He employed a number of sculptors from Jaipur for this purpose. The temple was constructed in 1902. Shri Haraprasad Das Jain made a free gift of the houses, along with the temples, to the public. In the trust deed that he executed on the 31st March, 1918 he himself mentions as follows:

“I have got two houses built at a high cost adjacent to each other in Mahalla Mahajan Toli No. 1 in Arrah and on the upper storey of one of these houses I have got constructed in white marble *Sikhariji* and Shri *Kailashji* in miniature. I have further got the temple at Pawapuri along with the tank constructed in white marble and also the temple of Shri Champapuri. In all these I have installed the *charans* of the Gods. In the houses I have installed the Gods Adinath, Parasnath, Mahavir Swami, the 24th *Tirthankara* and a few *pratimas*”.

These temples are marvellous specimens of modern Jain art and the architecture is superb.

Shri Bahubali Jain Mandir

Shri Jain Bala Vishram on the outskirts of Arrah is an institution for imparting education and culture to the girls. This institution is the gift of Smt. Nem Sundar Devi, widow of the late Shri Dhanendra Das Jain of Arrah. Within the compound of this higher standard institution, the donor has built a 15' high statue of Shri Bahubali Swami like the statue at Shravan Belgola in Mysore. The 57' high image of Bahubali Swami in Mysore has been copied at Venur and at Karkal in South India. There was no replica anywhere in Northern India till this statue of 15' in height and 25 maunds in weight was installed. The transport of this statue unscathed and its installation without any scratch were hailed with joy by the Jains all over the country. The statue in the temple is over an arti-

ficial hillock and there are exquisite engravings of flowers, fruits and creepers round the temple. Although situated in a girls' institution, people are allowed freely to go in and pay their homage.

Jalamandir

Pawapuri in Patna district is the place where Mahavir Swami the 24th and last *Tirthankara* had his *samadhi*. It has an exquisite temple built inside a tank which has a captivating mass of lotus flowers. The late Shri Abhoy Kumar Jain of Arrah conceived the idea of reproducing the Pawapuri temple in Arrah and he translated his dream into a vivid reality. This Jalamandir is a miniature Pawapuri temple. There is a 40' long bridge with a width of 4' for reaching the temple within the tank. The temple has a fine image of Mahavir Swami and the surroundings are furnished by a well-kept garden. Both the sculptor and the architect have displayed their remarkable talents in the erection of this *Jalamandir*.

Nandeshwar Dwip Mandir

There are 52 small *Chaityalayas* in this temple. The workmanship here also is superb.

Sahasra Kuta Chaitalya

This temple is under the Adinath temple in Dhanpura, a suburb of Arrah town. 1000 Jain *Arhat* images are installed in this temple. One can study Jain iconography in all its phases at this one place. The images are well-carved and fine specimens. Pilgrims from all over India come to visit this *Chaityalaya* and pay their homage.

Shri Adinath Mandir

The late Shri Makhanlal Jain had this temple built at

Dhanpura with the images of Lord Adinath, Parasnath and others installed there.

Panchayati Jain Mandir

As the name implies, this temple is the result of the combined efforts of the Jains of Arrah and it shows how deeply religious they are. It is wonderful to see one thousand Jain images carved in one stone piece. A number of important relics have been collected and preserved here. Panchayati Jain Mandir also attracts thousands of Jain pilgrims and non-Jain visitors every year.

Chaubishi Jain Mandir

The late Shri Sukhanath Jain had this temple constructed. There are 24 images of the *Tirthankaras*, of similar colour as mentioned in Jain *Agams*. The images are graceful and speak very highly of the sculptors.

It may be incidentally mentioned that, apart from the Jain temples, there are various other Jain cultural institutions and a famous library, known as Jain Siddhanta Bhawan, established in 1905 by Shri Deo Kumar Jain. The library has now about 18,000 books and 8,000 manuscripts of Jain literature, besides a collection of rare coins, stamps and paintings. This is a great place for research but unfortunately not much utilised. The Jains also maintain a few charitable dispensaries, *dharamshalas*, a Jain High School and a Degree College named after Haraprasad Das Jain. The College has now more than 3,000 students. All the Jain festivals, namely, *Mahavir Jayanti*, *Shrut Panchami Parwa*, *Raksha Bandhan Parwa*, *Mahavir Nirvana Divash* etc., are properly celebrated by the Jains here.

It could be truly said that the Jains of Arrah have been able to revive the lost glory of Shahabad district as a centre of Jain pilgrimage.

14. SONEPUR

The Hariharnath temple at Sonapur in Saran district is now more known for the great Sonapur *mela* on *Kartik Purnima* day. The *mela* runs for about a month and is attended by lakhs of people. The congregation is the largest on the *Purnima* day for the bath in the river and *puja* at Hariharnath. The village of Sonapur assumes a different look for a month during the *mela* time.

Sonapur is a very important junction on the North-Eastern Railway. It is the district headquarters of the Traffic and Locomotive Departments. There are large Railway workshops and a number of quarters for employees. The Railway colony has a Recreation Club. The old Gandak railway bridge by the side of the Sonapur Railway Station was opened by the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, in March, 1887. It is 2,176 feet long and is built of eight spans of 250 feet, with two broad pathways for pedestrians. Because of the swift flow of the Gandak when in flood and of the unstable nature of its bed, the bridge was regarded as a triumph of engineering skill when it was built. But this bridge was later found unable to meet the requirements of the heavy traffic which developed with time, and another magnificent railway bridge at some distance from the old one was constructed. The old bridge was handed over to the State Government for road traffic. Without an effective railway bridge the Hariharnath temple at Sonapur will be almost inaccessible. The river has no regular steamer service.

Sonapur is also connected with Hajipur, a town across the river, by a pontoon bridge which is dismantled during

the floods. Incidentally, Sonepur railway station had the longest platform in the world, being 2,415 feet in length, but it lost this distinction in 1950. Its place is now taken by Storvik, a station in Sweden, the longest of Storvik's platforms being 2,470 feet.

Sonepur village is in the Sadar subdivision of Saran district. There is a police *thana*, a post and telegraph office and a well-appointed large Inspection Bungalow. Rickshaws and ekkas are available to go to the Hariharnath temple, which is about a mile from the railway station. Sonepur is a growing town now. There are some *dharmshalas*. At the time of the Sonepur *mela* the whole area of about four square miles becomes a canvas town. Thousands of people pass several days in the tents and in the open air. Hundreds of shops function. Several lakhs of people visit the Hariharnath temple during the month of *Kartik* and offer oblations. The *mela* is entirely due to the *puja* of Lord Hariharnath for which people come.

Sonepur has the legend that this was the actual place where, in pre-historic times, the fight ended between the lords of the forest and the water, *Gaj* and *Grah*—the elephant and the crocodile. According to the *Srimad Bhagavat Purana*, there was a vast lake round the Trikut hill, which had, as the name implies, three towering peaks, crowned with dense forest and infested with wild animals. There lived a huge crocodile in this lake. An elephant came with a herd to the tank to have a bath. The crocodile caught the elephant by the leg and tried to drag him into deeper water. The elephant gave a stiff resistance. The struggle continued for a thousand years and ultimately all the elephants and the crocodiles joined in the contest. The elephant, beginning to weaken, prayed to the supreme god - Hari, to help him. His prayer was heard and Hari saved

him from the grip of the crocodile in the presence of Hara and other gods.

In Hindu mythology the crocodile is deemed to have been in its previous birth a Gandharva chief named Huhu. Huhu went to bathe in this lake with a party of Gandharva women and, it is said, in a truculent manner he caught a holy sage by the leg. The sage Dewala Muni, who had also come to have his bath, got angry and cursed the Gandharva chief and changed him into a crocodile as a punishment. Thenceforward he lived in the lake in the form of a huge crocodile until he was restored to his Gandharva life by the sacred touch of Vishnu (Hari), who, with his discus (Chakra), cut the throat of the crocodile while delivering the elephant from his jaws. On the other hand, the elephant was, in its former existence, a king of the Pandyas, Indradyumna by name, who was a very pious man of a contemplative turn of mind. One day, in a forgetful and contemplative mood, he did not pay his respects to the sage Agastya. The sage cursed him and put him in the form of an elephant. He, too, after long suffering, was saved by Hari by his touch, and was allowed to accompany him to Vaikuntha (heaven).

ANTIQUITY OF SONEPUR

Harihar-Kshetra or Sonapur, along with Hajipur within a few miles, was an integral part of the Vrijjian Republic. The area of Sonapur-Hajipur remained for long under the influence of Vratyas or Kikatas who were famous for their wealth in kine. In Buddhist and Jain literature Sonapur does not directly come, but in the "Records of Buddhist Religion" there is mention of the existence of a *Sangharam* on the confluence of the Mahi and the Sagar, which were either small rivulets or tributaries to the Gandak.

There is a stone pillar of the Sunga period in the *Kali Mandir* of Sonapur. Some statues of the Gupta and Pala periods have been recently found. In the memoirs of Fa-Hian and Hieun Tsang there is, however, no mention of a place like *Hari-Har Kshetra* (Sonapur). But Fa-Hian, after visiting Vaisali en route to Magadha, went four *yojanas** east and came to the confluence of the five rivers. After crossing the river, and going south one *yojana*, he reached Magadha and the town of Pataliputra† (Palinful). Considering the distance of one *yojana* and the direction mentioned it will appear that Fa-Hian had actually gone through the Sonapur region to reach Pataliputra. Vaishali, so very famous in Buddhist and Jain religions, is within twenty miles of Sonapur. A large number of ancient relics have been found in Vaishali, which is claimed by a large section of the Jainas as the birth-place of Mahavira Vardhamana, the 24th *Tirthankara* of Jainism. Buddha had also passed this way.

TEMPLE OF HARIHARNATH

The origin of the Shiva temple at Sonapur known as Hariharnath is shrouded in mystery. A large section of orthodox Hindus believe that the temple was built by Rama on his way to Janakpur to win Sita. There is, however, no reference to this in the *Ramayana*. But that Rama passed this way is established. It is a fact that the whole of Tirhut division is imbued with the Rama-Sita cult and there are a large number of temples throughout the Tirhut division, consisting of Champaran, Saran, Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga (Mithila) districts, which commemorate the deeds of Rama, Sita, Valmiki, etc. It may be correct

* S. Beal's *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol. I, Page LIV.

† *Ibid*, Page LV.

to assume that this Hariharnath temple might have originated in this manner. The present temple, however, is not old. There is not much of architecture. As Spooner has observed: "We see a single square chamber, constituting of the *cella*, with a simple, ordinary roof, rising to a point, and with a narrow porch in front. These are the constituents of our simplest form of temple, and in the present example we find them in as simple forms as now are traceable among the existing and recorded monuments."*

There is a stray reference to the temple of Hariharnath during the Subedarship of Raja Man Singh who is said to have done some repair work. The present temple was built by Raja Ram Narain, a noted figure of Bihar during the later Mughal period. The temple has been recently reconstructed by the Birlas. The temple of Hariharnath Mahadeo is the principle place of worship here but several smaller temples also receive the offerings of pilgrims. Among these are the Kali Asthan and the Panch Devata Mandir; the latter was built by a priestess who claimed to have built the temple with the offerings she received.

Sonepur is considered a very holy place and the ceremonial bathing in the Ganga in the month of *Kartik* is held by the orthodox Hindus to be a great act of virtue. But another great attraction is the fair which is held during the whole period of Ganga *snan* (bath). It lasts for about a month, but is at its height for two days before and two days after the bathing in the Ganga on the day of the full moon (*Kartik Purnamasi*). Immense crowds assemble. The roads leading to Sonepur from all the sides are literally packed with people for a few days.

* Temple Types in Tirhut, D. B. Spooner, *Journal of B. & O. Research Society*, Vol. III, Pt. II, (Patna).

Many special trains are run by the railway authorities and yet there is always a complaint and the trains are jam-packed. A large number of cattle, horses and elephants is offered for sale. It is said that the Sonapur cattle fair is the second largest cattle fair in the world. Previously hundreds of horses, camels, sheep and elephants used to be brought and most of them were sold out. All the rich people of Northern India used to get their elephants from this market. The turn-over of consumers' goods in this fair is also enormous. Previously hundreds of prostitutes and dancing girls used to spend a month in tents spreading vice and disease. By an Act this vice has been stopped.

The period of the inception of the fair, like the temple, is also not known for certain. Previously the fair was held at Hajipur (Ramchaura) and only oblations were offered to the deity at Sonapur. Hajipur is just across the river. The names of the various *muhallas* in Hajipur in the *mela* area have been reproduced in the *mela* area of Sonapur. The fair at Sonapur appears to have come into prominence during the reign of Aurangzeb and the elephant trade went up.

Marshall, a European traveller in the 16th Century, had mentioned that even the traders of the far-flung *Tatar desh* used to come to the fair to deal in commerce. The fair was the occasion of a large social and sporting gathering of the Europeans. The Sonapur fair was much patronised by the European indigo planters of the Nineteenth Century. A large camp was held in a magnificent grove and the visitors amused themselves with racing, polo, gymkhanas, tennis and dances. They did much to improve the surroundings of the temple and the road communications.

There is a description of Sonapur fair by M. Wilson in his *Memoirs of Bihar*, written a century ago. In 1852,

Wilson was an Assistant Manager of Karhaul factory. He has mentioned that one could buy from the canvas-made shops the commodities of Manchester, Buckingham, Delhi, Kanpur, Afghanistan, Kashmir, etc. Cutlery, saddlery, crockery and furniture shops from Calcutta, Lucknow and Kanpur used to be set up at Sonapur. There used to be riding contests, elephant, horse and bullock cart races. He had seen a *panch kalyan* horse being offered for sale for a lakh of rupees. Several Viceroys, including Lord Northbrook, had visited the Sonapur fair and gone round the temple.

The investiture ceremony or *Khillaut* of Rana Jang Bahadur of Nepal conferred by Lord Mayo, amidst the galaxy of big men, for his service and loyalty to the Government during the Mutiny (1857), was a great event in the history of the Sonapur fair. Rana Jang Bahadur visited and did *pūja* at the Hariharnath temple. It may be mentioned here that there is a Nepali temple, a wooden structure, in Hajipur which is also visited by many of the pilgrims going to Hariharnath temple.

15. UCHAITHA

There is a modern temple of Durga on an obviously ancient site at Uchaitha village, which is about 30 miles north-west of Darbhanga railway station of the North-Eastern Railway. Passenger buses ply from Darbhanga to Benipatti—a distance of 26 miles. From Benipatti to Uchaitha there is an unmetalled road for three miles. This road becomes impassable for the vehicles excepting bullock carts during the rainy season. Benipatti has rickshaws, ekkas and bullock carts which could be hired to reach Uchaitha. Benipatti is the headquarters of the police station. It has a Block Development Office and a Post Office.

People outside Bihar do not usually know that local legends widely prevalent in Mithila associate Kalidasa, the immortal poet in the court of ancient Ujjain, with Uchaitha during his early years as a student.

It is said that there was a *pathshala* in this village where Kalidasa was reading. The students of the school used to go to the temple of the goddess Durga for lighting *deepaks* and for chanting hymns. On a dark night his class fellows decided to send Kalidasa, who was a dull student, to the goddess for *puja*. They polished his hands with black and white powder and told him to touch the face of the goddess with his hands so that they could know that he had really visited the place. Kalidasa went to the temple and lighted the *deepak*. He tried to mark the face of the goddess with black and white powder. The goddess appeared and advised him not to mark her face with powder. She also asked him as to what he wanted as a

boon. Kalidasa said, "I want to be learned." She said, "You may go and turn over all the pages of the whole book". He came to his residential *pathashala* in the night while all were asleep. At the dead of night, as advised by the goddess, he turned over all the pages one by one and slept. When some students of the hostel woke up in the early morning and began their studies Kalidasa marked their mistakes in pronunciation and shouted "wrong", "wrong." This conduct of his enraged them and they made a complaint to their Guru that Kalidasa, who was considered to be a very dull student, disturbed them in their studies. The Guru called him and asked as to why he was misbehaving. Kalidasa promptly replied in an unusual way that he could not tolerate the wrong pronunciation of his class fellows. The Guru, to his utter surprise, found that the boys had erred in their pronunciation and that Kalidasa was fully justified in pointing out their mistakes. He asked Kalidasa about this sudden development of great intellect in him. Kalidasa narrated the story of the previous night when he had the privilege of meeting the goddess Durga, who had appeared before him and gave him the blessing of wonderful learning. For this very divine achievement the place is called *Siddhipitha* of Kalidasa.

There is a slight variation to the story. Some say that Kalidasa was blessed by the goddess Kali who was visited at midnight. It is said that no one could dare to visit the temple of Kali at midnight as he would be dead by such a visit. The boys at the *pathshala* wanted to test the courage of Kalidasa and asked him to visit the temple at midnight. Kalidasa did this and the goddess, being pleased with his courage, blessed him that he would be a great scholar. It may be mentioned here that Durga and Kali are the manifestations of Mahasakti.

Kalidasa ultimately became the court poet of Vikramaditya who was known as Chandra Gupta II. We need not enter into the historical controversy regarding the age of Kalidasa or the age of Vikramaditya.

The temple faces the east. It has a round dome. The temple is on the edge of a tank. The tank is a small reservoir with flights of steps to reach the water. The temple appears to be a recent structure. At the entrance to the temple there is a verandah measuring 10 feet by 12. Above this there is a room for the goddess Durga which is about 8 feet by 10 feet. There is also an image of the goddess Durga in black stone about 2 feet high. A lotus flower can be seen on the back of a lion and the goddess is sitting on it. There is Brahma on the left and Moon on the right side. There is an image, 6 inches high, of the goddess Kali, on the left side of the goddess Durga. All the four arms of the goddess Durga are cut off and the head is missing. The image is said to have been desecrated. Some small images of Ganesha, Shiva, Vishnu, Lakshmi and Hanuman are on the right side of the goddess Durga. They are of black stone.

It is said that the late Maharajadhiraja Sir Rameshwar Singh of Darbhanga had expressed his desire to reinstate the head of the image. Accordingly, an order was placed and the head was carved out. Before the installation of the head, he had a dream in which the goddess told him, "I am the creator and you want to create my head. Do you think it is proper for you to create my head?" The *Maharajadhiraja* was upset. The *Mahantha* of Uchaitha temple had also the same dream. At last it was decided that the head should not be installed. The priests of the temple took the head from the *Maharajadhiraja* and kept it near the image to offer it the usual

offerings. The stone head is still lying in the temple precincts.

A few years ago, the tank was cleaned and a number of images were found. All of them were removed to the Patna Museum. The site is very old and an excavation may yield good results.

In front of the temple of the goddess Durga there is newly constructed a temple of Lord Shiva. There is also a small temple of Bhairava in the rear side of the Shiva temple. Just below these temples flows the river Kamla.

On the other side of the river, towards the south-east of the temple, is the site of what is believed to be the *pathshala* of Kalidasa. In local dialect and survey records it is mentioned as *Kalidasko Chaupdi* i.e., the college of Kalidasa. *Chaupdi* is derived from the Sanskrit word *Chatushpathi* i.e., where the four Vedas are read and taught. It is an elevated piece of ground measuring about one *bigha* in area.

So far as the architecture is concerned, the temple is reconstructed in the Indo-Aryan style. There is a square *cella* for the image. It is curvilinear and there is no trace of storeys and it is surmounted by the massive circular coping stone i.e. *amalaka*, on which the *kalasa* has been put.

The priests of the temple are of the Vaishnava sect. The temple is their ancestral property. It is not under any trust. About 300 visitors come to offer prayer daily. Ladies of the locality bring *pitha* (made of flour) and milk to offer to the goddess on the occasion of *Vijaya-dashmi*.

People from all over the locality take little pieces of earth from here to erect *pindi* (small globes) in their houses, more particularly on the occasion of the sacred thread ceremony of their sons. Some earth of this place

is preserved in Darbhanga at the Mithila Institute of Post-graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit.

Regarding the routine of the rituals, the deity is daily bathed morning and evening and this is followed by the priest performing *pūja*, accompanied by the ringing of bells and drums.

Durga Devi is known to fulfil whatever desire is expressed before her by the devotee. This goddess being essentially a goddess of the masses, the number of such vows taken and gifts made or other acts performed in fulfilment of such vows is very great. The offerings are varied.

Like many other places a *mela* is held near the temple during *Vijayadashmi*. On *Saptami*, *Ashtami* and *Navami* about 1,500 visitors come to visit the shrine and offer *prasād*. These three days are the chief days of the fair.

16. KURKIHAR

This is a village about 3 miles north-east of Wazirganj and 16 miles east of Gaya. Gaya is the headquarters of the district of the same name and is one of the largest cities in Bihar. Gaya is famous throughout India for the Maha Bodhi temple at Buddha Gaya (Bodh Gaya) and the Vishnupada temple in Gaya itself. It is to Gaya that devout Hindus go in lakhs every year to offer oblations for the welfare of their ancestors. During the *Pitri Paksha* period particularly innumerable people from all over India visit Gaya for offering *sraddha*. Gaya is one of the ancient cities in India and has seen the best of the days of Brahmanic orthodoxy and hold of Buddhism and Jainism. This is a district which abounds in old temples and relics almost at every corner and even in some of the inaccessible villages. We have the famous Surya temple at Deo, the rock-cut temple at Umga, the famous temple at Konch, Barabar Hill with caves, etc. At one time there must have been hundreds of Buddhistic images, in various postures and with wonderful sculpture, literally strewn about. The delicate execution of images in the Pala period is amply illustrated by a large number of finds, particularly at Kurkihar village.

Kurkihar will bring nostalgic memory to even the most disinterested visitor. This is a village where a very large number of exquisite specimens of art of the Pala period were found. It is believed that Kurkihar may still yield many more specimens. It is common knowledge that a large number of finds have disappeared while a good

many went to the local *zamindar** and others. Luckily, a large number of specimens have been preserved in the State Museum of Patna. Kurkihar is easily accessible by road from Gaya. Taxis and passenger buses are available at Wazirganj. There is a dak bungalow at Wazirganj.

The extent of ruined mounds, the remarkable quantity of old sculpture, carved building stones and ancient bricks which have been found at Kurkihar are sufficient evidence that this was the site of an old monastery and a few temples.

General Cunningham has mentioned that the site of Kurkihar is *Kukuta-Pada-Giri* or "Hill of the Cocks' feet", described by the two Chinese pilgrims, Fa Hian (Fourth Century A.D.) and Hsuen Tsang (Seventh Century A.D.). Cunningham has further mentioned that the true name of Kurkihar was *Kurak-Vihar*, as the Sanskrit *Kukkuta* was then represented by the Hindi forms *Kukkar* and *Kurak*.

Mr. Beal has suggested that Mr. Cunningham had confounded the *Vihar* of the Cocks' feet, which was just outside the city of Pataliputra, with the "Hill of the Cocks' feet", which, according to Hsuen Tsang, was 16 miles to the east of Gaya. Fa Hian himself had made a mistake in placing the Cocks' Feet Hill at only 3 *li* or half a mile to the south of Pataliputra. Mr. Beal corrected this to 3 *yojanas* or 21 miles. But the actual distance is over 50 miles.

Mr. Cunningham has further mentioned that he considered the name of Kurkihar to be only a shortened form of *Kurak Vihar* which certainly had reference to a monastery. In fact no Buddhist establishment had existed without a monastery and he presumes that the monastery of Kurkihar was known as *Kukuta-Pada-Giri-Vihar* or "Vihar of the Cocks' foot Hill."

* *Archaeological Survey of India*, Vol. XV. P. 4-6.

Regarding the mountain, Fa-Hian's account is as follows:—*

“The great *chia-yeh* (Kasyapa) is at present in this mountain. He split the mountain to get in; the place where he entered will barely admit a man. Going down to a great distance there is a niche in which stands a full length image of *chia-yeh*. Outside the niche is the place where he used to wash his hands and the people of the district, if they have the headache, use the earth (from the spot) for plasters, and are at once cured. Therefore, since that time there have been *Lo-hans* on this mountain, and when the devotees of the neighbouring country come yearly to make their offerings to *chia-yeh*, the *Lo-hans* appear by night to the steadfast ones, converse with them, and resolve their doubts; they then suddenly vanish. On this mountain there are quantities of trees; also a great many lions, tigers, and wolves; so that travellers have to be cautious.”

Hsien Tsang describes the hill as lofty and scrapped, with three-fold peaks that spring into the air. After receiving Buddha's instruction for twenty years, Kasyapa ascended the Kukuta-Pada mountain on the north side, and walked along towards the south-west, where he was stopped by a scrapped face. He struck the rock with his staff and left it in two and then marched boldly into the heart of the mountain. On reaching the middle peak he took up Buddha's *chivara* (dress). The three peaks approached and retired (or closed and opened) according to his mere wish. When Maitreya visited this mountain, Kasyapa presented him with the *chivara* of Buddha, and after performing some miracles entered into *nirvana*. All this legend is now fading out so far as the people of the locality are concerned.

* *Translation of Fa-Hian's Travels* by Herbert A. Gills, P. 83.
T.B.—5

So far as the relics are concerned, carved slabs of large size and architectural fragments of all kinds are found in plenty, often built into the walls of the houses; votive *stupas* of different sizes are seen in number on the edge of the large tank adjoining the village on the south, where they now serve as washerman's stones, as well as in other places; and great quantities of large bricks of ancient make are still being dug out of the great mound south of the village. There is a fine collection of Kurkihar bronze and Buddhist antiquities in the Patna Museum. Some well-preserved sculptures had been removed by the local *zamindar* to his bungalow in the village, the most interesting of which is a relievo representing a teaching Bodhisatwa seated in the niche of rocks between two female attendants. In the frieze above are worshippers approaching a *stupa* with offerings, and the top of the relievo shows five Bodhisatwas each enshrined in a small niche. The moulding below the lotus seat contains the usual Buddhist formula inscribed in characters of the Ninth or Tenth Century A.D. and the composition of the whole relievo shows a curious resemblance to many of the products of Graeco-Buddhist art in Gandhara. The finds include fine figures of various deities, both Hindu and Buddhistic.

There is another collection of ancient sculptures in the courtyard of the temple of Bhagavati. One of them is a singularly beautiful figure of the Buddha in meditation, which probably dates back to the Tenth Century A.D. At Punawan, 3 miles to the south-west, there are more Buddhist remains, but much has been destroyed by the villagers digging for bricks, and the remains of an ancient temple of Triloknath, which once stood here, have now been all carried away.

17. MASARH

The village Masarh in the Sadar sub-division of Shahabad district is about six miles west of Arrah town—the headquarters of the district. The village is connected both by rail and road. The nearest railway station, Karisath on the main line of the Eastern Railway, is at a distance of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Masarh. Excepting bullock-carts, which also have to be arranged in advance, there is no other conveyance from Karisath railway station to Masarh. The all-weather road from Arrah to Buxar passes through Bibiganj village about 5 miles from Arrah town. There is an unmetalled road from Bibiganj to Masarh covering a distance of about a mile. The *kutchra* road could be negotiated by a jeep or a rickshaw only in the dry season. In the rainy season no other conveyance but a bullock-cart can negotiate the road. To the east of the village there is a small river by name Banas. It is commonly believed that the village was once almost on the bank of the river Ganga which has now receded to a distance of about 10 miles. There is no resting place at Masarh.

Masarh is an ancient village full of relics. The old name of the village, as mentioned in the inscriptions in the Jain temple of Parasnath at the village, is Mahasara. According to legend, it is the seat of Banasura or Banaraja whose daughter Usha was married to Aniruddha, a grandson of Lord Krishna. Hiuen Tsang visited the village and the village is identified to be Hiuen Tsang's *Mo-cho-so-la*. General Cunningham of the Archaeological Survey of India mentions that the village was originally called

Padmavatipura till Vimalanatha, a Jain Kshatriya of Masarh, a village elsewhere, became the proprietor of the village and changed the name to Mahasara. Mahasara means large lake. Near the village there is a large tank commonly supposed to have extended over 52 *bighas* of land. The tank is now mostly silted up excepting a few patches.

There is another legend about the place-name. Some say that the previous place-name of the village was *Malla Sanrh*. *Malla* means a wrestler and *Sanrh* means a bull. It is said that King Banasura had built an *akhra* or a place for wrestling bouts where he used to practise wrestling and even wrestle with a bull. There is a mound near Karisath railway station which is pointed out to be the place of the wrestling bouts of Banasura. According to another legend, there were two *janapadas* here namely, Karusha and Malad. Karusha is substituted by Karisath, the name of the railway station and the small village, and Masarh is substituted for Malad. Another legend is that Masarh is the ancient Sonitpur, the seat of Aniruddha, the grandson of Lord Krishna. Tejpur in Assam is also claimed to be the ancient Sonitpur, the capital of Aniruddha. All these legends, however, make out that Masarh is evidently an ancient site, the history of which has not yet been fully disclosed.

The last District Gazetteer of Shahabad published in 1924 mentions that there are no Buddhist relics, but enormous images of Brahmanic goddesses were found which are still in the village. The Gazetteer mentions:—

“The remains at Masarh are confined to these images, the foundations of some small temples and a Jain temple completed in 1819 A.D. The latter contains eight Jain statues on which are several inscriptions going back to 1386 A.D., when some Rathor Jains of Marwar appear to have

settled in the village; another figure of Parasnath contains an inscription stating that the image was dedicated by Babu Sankar Lal of Aramnagar during the prosperous English rule over *Karusha-desa*. This record, though modern (1818 A.D.) is of interest as it identifies the district of Shahabad with the ancient *Karusha-desa* of the Puranas while the town of Arrah appears as Aramnagar which is probably the true form of the name as handed down in the Jain books (see vol. III Reports, A.S.I.)’’.

It will be, however, somewhat rash to observe that there are no Buddhist relics at Masarh. Some of the ruined images scattered even now in the compound of the existing temple, known as the Devi temple, look like images of the *Siddhas* of later Buddhism. These images are made out of rough sandstone and there is no polish. Usually of the size of one foot to two and a half feet, it appears that quite a few of them were subjected to vandalism.

A number of broken Shiva *lingams* made of glazed blackstone are still lying scattered about. It is said that the legendary king Banasura was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. The place was the seat of Shaivism and the Shiva *lingam* in the temple has been regularly worshipped. A large image identified as that of Vishnu was found at Masarh towards Karisath village. This eight feet high image has been removed and is now preserved at the Patna Museum. The villagers of Masarh think that the removal of the image, which was the image of Banasura Raja, has been the cause of the economic poverty of the villagers.

A very remarkable and unique feature of the village is a Jain temple of Parasnath which also accommodates Lord Shiva in his *linga roopa*. The villagers think that the Jain temple was allowed to be constructed only on the condition that a Shiva *lingam* be enshrined within. The Jain temple is about sixty feet high and is rectangular in

shape. It is located by the side of a big tank in an area of about three *bighas* of land. There is an open platform with six round pillars about seven feet high and four feet in diameter supporting a roof. The pillars are well-executed and have got some carvings near the top. After the courtyard there is a *pradakshina path* which leads to a door facing the north, which leads again to the room of the main shrine of Parasnath. The room where the deity is enshrined is rectangular and the image of Parasnath is in a sitting posture. The image is in black stone and is well-polished. It is about four feet high.

There is a religious trust, known as Manilal Trust, which looks after the temple. The daily offerings are coloured yellow *arwa* rice, *kamalgatta*, *keshar*, flowers and water. The annual *puja* takes place in the month of *Shravana* when hundreds of Jains visit and do *bandana* at the temple.

The Shiva temple facing east is in the same building. There is a dome on the top of the temple. The *lingam* is enshrined in a dark and unventilated room measuring 16' × 12'. On the eve of *Shivaratri* and in the month of *Shravana*, the deity is worshipped with great pomp and hundreds of pilgrims congregate. In the *Shravana* month the deity is offered leaves and flowers of *akwan* plant, *dhatura*, flowers of *kanail*, etc.

Opposite the Shiva temple there is a Devi temple. It has been recently constructed but the deity is ancient. The image of the goddess was enshrined by the ancestor of a family of this village, which has now shifted to Udwantnagar. Although commonly said to be a Devi image, the foot of the image rests on a peacock. The priests would not allow a further investigation as to whether the image is of a female deity Devi Saraswati or of Kartikeya.

The only door leads to the main shrine which opens

into a small mandap 8'×4', and on the same *mandap* on the right side there is a Nandi and a small Shiva *lingam*. A number of images of other deities Ganesha, Saraswati and Vishnu, all very old, have also been preserved on the *mandap*. There are a number of other broken images of various deities. Two broken figures beautifully carved with images of Buddhist and Brahminical deities are lying uncared for. Largely attended *melas* are held on *Chaitra Navami* and *Vijaya Dashmi* at the Devi temple.

A visit to Masarh gives the impression that time has stood still here and the relics liberally scattered about amply suggest the glorious days Masarh has had. It is a landmark now housing a Jain image of Lord Parasnath and a Shiva *lingam* on the same site.

18. MAHESHI

This village in Saharsa district is rather inaccessible. The North Eastern Railway from Lucknow to Katihar stops at Mansi railway station. There is a branch line of the North Eastern Railway from Mansi to Madhepura via Saharsa. This area from Mansi to Madhepura used to be ravaged by unpredictable floods of the Kosi river known as the 'Sorrow of North Bihar'. There used to be frequent breaches in this area during the rainy season. Even now Mansi railway station is liable to erosion. The recent implementation of the Kosi Barrage near Birpur in Saharsa district and the construction of two large canals for diverting the excess water for irrigation is calculated to contribute to the economic stability of the district. It will also free the area from the frequent flood havoc of the Kosi.

Saharsa is the nearest railway station for the village Maheshi. From Saharsa to Bangaon, a distance of four miles, there is an all-weather road. Bangaon is a large village and has an Inspection Bungalow. From Bangaon to Maheshi, a distance of about three miles there is an apology for a road which is unmetalled and not passable even by jeeps in the rainy season. Only bullock-carts can negotiate the distance of three miles in the rainy season with great difficulties.

Maheshi village is ancient and, according to the legend commonly known throughout Bihar, was the place where Mandan Misra, a great philosopher of the Eighth Century, lived. It is here that Sankaracharya came from the south and had a philosophic discussion first with

Mandan Misra and then with his wife Bharati Devi.

The story mentions that Sankaracharya first met a maid servant filling up her pitcher from a tank and asked her where Mandan Misra lived. The maid servant replied in Sanskrit that he should go a little farther and when he could find a village on the same path where even the birds talk Sanskrit he should know that Mandan Misra lived there. Sankaracharya was amazed and followed the direction and came to Maheshi. He had a philosophic discussion (*Shastrartha*) and Mandan Misra was defeated. Mandan Misra's wife Bharati Devi told Sankaracharya that he had to defeat her also who was the other half of Mandan Misra. Sankaracharya agreed and Bharati Devi put some questions based on sexology. Sankaracharya could not reply as he did not know anything of sexology, and went back to equip himself. The body was left and the soul went into some one else to get an inkling of sexology. Bharati Devi was subsequently defeated by Sankaracharya in the discussion.

The villagers still show a mound at Maheshi village and mention that the philosophic discussion took place at that site.

It is at this village Maheshi that there is an Ugratara temple and it is said that Mandan was a devotee of this deity.

Ugratara temples are extremely rare in this part of the country. So far as it is known, there is no other regular temple of Ugratara anywhere in Bihar, although the image of Tara particularly of the Pala period have been found at various places, including Kurkihar in Gaya district. The worship of this rare deity at this inaccessible village excites curiosity, but can be explained from its background.

Ugratara is also known as Maha-Cina-Tara and this

later Buddhistic image has been imported into India from Tibet through Nepal. Saharsa district is quite close to Nepal. The frontiers of Saharsa district and the district of Saptari in Nepal adjoin. The cult of Tantricism has had a great development in the district of Saharsa. Ugratara is an image of Tantric culture.*

It has been mentioned: "The *Sammoha Tantra* speaks of the Tantric culture of foreign countries like Bahlika, Kirata, Bhota, Cina, Mahacina, Parasika, Airaka, Kamboja, Huna, Yavana, Gandhara and Nepal. This does not mean that the Indian *Tantras* were prevalent in all these countries, though we know they were prevalent in some of them. It means, if anything at all, that these foreign countries also possessed modes of esoteric culture, and that some of them were known in India, and recognised as being similar to the other Indian *Tantras*.

"It is, therefore, very difficult to find out what the borrowed elements, if any, are in the *Tantras*. They are so well-fitted into the system that they have lost their exotic character. Yet some stray references may be discovered in the *Tantras* to the borrowing of foreign modes of *Sadhana*. A particular mode of *Tantric Sadhana* called *Cinacara* is found in the *Tantras*. The *Tara-Tantra*, adopted both by Hinduism and Buddhism, says that the cult of *Cinacara* came from Maha Cina. A well-known Brahmana sage Vasishtha is said to have gone to the country of Maha Cina to learn this mode of *Sadhana* from the Buddha. It was not to be found either in India or in Tibet. So Vasishtha had to go to Maha Cina, where he was

* References—(1) Getty, Alice—*The gods of Northern Buddhism; progressive evolution through the northern Buddhist countries*, Clarendon press, 1914.

(2) Gordon, Antoinette K.—*The Iconography of Tibetan Lamaism*; C. E. Tuttle Co., 1959.

initiated by the Buddha into the secret doctrine of *Cinacara*. He subsequently came back to India and propagated it. Some scholars are inclined to discover in this *Cinacara* a distant echo of the secret societies of *Chia*. It is the cult of the Maha-Cina-Tara which is introduced by the *Cinacara*.

“Maha-Cina-Tara, as can be ascertained by the Buddhist *Sadhana*, was the same Goddess Ekajata, whose cult is said to have been discovered by *Siddha* Nagarjuna in Tibet. The description of Ekajata is found in six different Buddhist *Sadhanas*. It closely agrees with that of Maha-Cina-Tara, as found in some of the *Sadhanas*. Corresponding to these Goddesses we find in the Hindu pantheon Tara, Ugra Tara, Ekajata and Maha-Nila-Saraswati. The *Dhyanas* of these Goddesses, as found in the Hindu *Tantra*, literally correspond to those found in the Buddhist *Sadhana*. According to a legend recorded in the *Somoha Tantra*, Nila-Saraswati or Ugratara was born in a lake like *Cola* on the western side of Mount Meru. This name *Cola* is probably to be connected with *kul*, *kol* the common word for lake to the west and north of the Tien-Shan in the pure Mongolian zone.”*

Dr. Benoytosh Bhattacharya, in his *Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism*, has further observed on the cult as follows:—

“The origin of Tara is neither Hindu nor Buddhist; but it is of Tibetan extraction. Not only the deity is foreign but also her worship and practices connected therewith are foreign. The evidences of the Hindu *Tantras* also point to the same direction. In the *Taratantra*, for instance, we read Bhairavi wishing to know from her consort the way in which Buddha and Vasishtha obtained *siddhi*. Bhairava in reply said that by muttering the

* *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. IV, Pp. 224-25.

mantra of Ugratara, Buddha and Vasishtha obtained Siddhi.'**

Ugratara temples are rare in India but are to be seen in Tibet and in Nepal. The deity of Vajrayogini is the same as the deity of Ugratara. The temple of Vajrayogini at Sanku in Nepal really contains an image of Ugratara, more popularly known as Maha-China-Tara which is believed to have been carried over there by Bengali priests from a village Sanku in the district of Dacca near about A.D. 1350, when the Mohammedans ravaged portions of Eastern Bengal.**

This Ugratara or Maha-Cina-Tara of the Buddhists has been accepted in the Hindu pantheon under the name of Tara in various forms and is now regarded as one of the 10 *Mahavidya* Goddesses.

Dr. Benoytosh Bhattacharya mentions, "The worshipper should conceive himself as *Mahacine-Tara* who stands in the *pratyahidha* attitude, and awe-inspiring with a garland of heads hanging from the neck. She is short and has a protruding belly, and her looks are terrible. Her complexion is like that of the blue lotus, and she is three-eyed, one-faced, celestial and laughs horribly. She is in an intensely pleasant mood, stands on a corpse, is decked in ornaments of snakes, has red and round eyes, wears the garments of tiger-skin round her loins, is in youthful bloom, is endowed with the five auspicious symbols and has a protruding tongue. She is most terrible, appears fierce, with bare canine fangs, carries the sword and the *Kartri* in the two right hands and the *Uptala* and the *Kapala* in the two left. Her *Jatamukuta* of one coil is brown and

* Dr. Benoytosh Bhattacharya: *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism*, p. 155.

** Dr. Benoytosh Bhattacharya: *Indian Buddhist Iconography*.

fiery and bears the image of *Aksobhya* within it.” *

There are three images in the Ugratara temple at Maheshi. The central figure is that of Ugratara and the two other figures are those of Ekajata and Nila-Saraswati. The rituals according to Tantric form are performed. Worship in the ordinary way is also done by the non-Tantric pilgrims. The deity was endowed with the gift of a village by the *Maharajadhiraja* of Darbhanga and some of the *Maharajas* of Darbhanga House were great devotees of this Ugratara deity at Maheshi. Within the temple precincts there are a large number of smaller images which are also worshipped.

It is also a remarkable fact that within a couple of miles of Maheshi village there is a Sun temple at village Kandaha. Sun temples are also just a very few in Bihar. The existence of the Tantric deity Ugratara in the neighbourhood of the Sun temple, which once evidently was very popular, shows that different deities of the Hindu pantheon were worshipped almost in the same area, and speaks of the great eclecticism of Hinduism.

* Dr. Benoytosh Bhattacharya—*The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, pp. 198 to 191.

Dr. Benoytosh Bhattacharya has identified the image of Ugratara as Khadirvani Tara as the image has no fearful look, nor the neck with a garland of human heads or the figure standing on a dead body. The features according to Dr. Bhattacharya are those of Khadirvani Tara.

19. JAGARNATHPUR

Jagarnathpur is a village 6 miles south-west of Ranchi. Various plants of the Heavy Engineering Corporation are situated in an area round about the old village. The new township that has grown around these plants is known as Jagarnathpur. The area was previously known as Hatia but, after an enquiry into the matter of several rival names that had been proposed, the name of Jagarnathpur was chosen. The main portion of the original Jagarnathpur village is now in the township of Jagarnathpur.

Ranchi has got a large number of hotels of good standard, rest houses, Inspection Bungalows and *Dharam-shalas*. Taxies and rickshaws are available in plenty. There are passenger buses running from Ranchi to Jagarnathpur. On special occasions a large number of extra passenger buses also run. Ranchi is on the air map of India too. There are non-scheduled daily air flights to Ranchi from Calcutta.

Ranchi district has had a tremendous industrialisation and urbanisation in the course of the last one decade. The minerals of Chotanagpur, and particularly iron ore, manganese, bauxite, coal etc., have not been fully utilised so long. The forest wealth of Ranchi is also immense. The industrialisation of the district with Ranchi as the centre will make Ranchi very soon the centre of a zone that may well come to be regarded as the Ruhr of India. Already the Central Offices of the Hindustan Steel that run a number of steel factories, have been shifted to Ranchi. Another all-India concern, the National Coal Development

Company, has its headquarters in Ranchi. The district and Ranchi, the district headquarters, are also interesting for the anthropologists, particularly in tracing the changes of the Adivasis through different ages. For the tourists and the pilgrims Ranchi has a great interest because of the climate, beautiful natural scenery, beauty spots, industrial concerns and temples. Besides railway connections, throughout the district there are excellent roads well-served by good passenger buses.

There is a high rocky hill at Jagarnathpur commanding an extensive view of the surrounding plateau. This hill contains the largest and the most popular temple in the district of Ranchi. This is a temple of Lord Jagarnath and the temple is built on a plan roughly resembling that of the temple of Lord Jagarnath at Puri.

The temple was built in 1691 A.D. by Thakur Aini Shahi, a *Khorposdar* of the Nagavanshi family, and the village was granted to Jagarnath as a *devottar*. The whole of the Ranchi district, before the abolition of the *zamindari*, comprised of only one *Tauzi* and the Maharaja of Chotanagpur was the *Zamindar*. The Maharaja of Chotanagpur belongs to the Nagavanshi Rajput family. The theory held by the Britishers that the family was of Munda origin, but became highly Hinduised, does not appear to be correct. Even the first Maharaja had the name of Phani Mukut which is a Hindu and not a Munda name. Phani Mukut married a Rajput princess of Panchet Raj in Manbhum. There were about sixty to seventy successive Maharajas and, taking the average duration of each at thirty years, the family has been obviously Hindu for centuries. It appears that the British ethnologists had put too much stress on the family name "Nagavanshi" and thought that, since the family had a totem,

it must be aboriginal in origin, as the Mundas are totemistic. This theory has no support. The Nagavanshi Maharaja family was split into numerous branches and each one of them has an old genealogy and has married freely into Rajput families. A parallel instance will be of the ruling families of the princely States of Orissa which have now been liquidated. The Maharaja of Mayurbhanj has got the *mayur* or the peacock as the emblem. No one has come out with the theory that the Mayurbhanj house is aboriginal in origin. Serpents are held very sacred by this family, which associates its origin with the *naga* or snake. No Nagavanshi would kill a snake and the monogram of the Maharaja of Chotanagpur has the imprint of a snake. It may be mentioned, incidentally, that it is pertinent to hold that the Rajputs, as a caste, are a conglomerated body and have taken in various warrior families from Kashmir downwards. Anyone carving out a small principality of his own with the help of swords and men had the liberty to call himself a Rajput and was subsequently accepted as such. In this light also, since at least from the beginning of the Christian era the Nagavanshi line of Chotanagpur has had a highly Hinduised set-up, it will be futile to call them Mundas in origin.

To further the tempo of consolidation of power, the Maharaja of Chotanagpur brought in a large number of Rajputs from other parts of Bihar and settled them with lands and tenures. This was to facilitate the marriage of the boys and girls of the Nagavanshi chiefs and of their branches with the descendants of the Rajput families. Similarly, the Nagavanshi Rajputs and their tenureholders or *Khorposdars* brought in a large number of Brahmins mostly from Orissa and gave them extensive lands so that the priestly services could be done by them. These Oriya Brahmin families are still found in the in-

terior of the Ranchi district and even in very inaccessible villages. Hinduisation of the Mundas and other aboriginals of Ranchi district has been much accelerated by the induction of the Brahmin priestly families. It is wrong to think that the infiltration of Hinduism has been slow but steady in Ranchi district, as held by some anthropologists. Hinduism has been there at least from the beginning of the Christian era and the Nagavanshi Chotanagpur Maharajas gave liberal support to the spread of Hinduism in this aboriginal country. It is also a fact that, with the bettering of the economic status, the families who were on the borderline became more Hinduised. The eclecticism of Hinduism attracted the aboriginals. The Hindu festivals, like *Durga Puja* etc., have always been freely participated in by the aboriginals.

The construction of the Jagarnath temple at Jagarnathpur was not an isolated attempt at building a Hindu temple in a land where predominantly the animistic tribes lived. Round about the time the Jagarnath temple at Jagarnathpur was built, another Hindu temple was reared at Chutia, which is now a part of the town of Ranchi. The Chutia temple is a small square enclosure, with four flanking bastions and a well in the centre, which is approached by a gradually descending covered passage. There is an inscription on the northern wall of the temple, which shows that the temple was constructed in *Samvat* 1742 (1685 A.D.) by one Hari Brahmachari, the Guru of the Raja during the reign of Raja Raghunath, the fiftieth in descent from Raja Phanimukut. At Doisa or Doisanagar, another village 40 miles south-west of Ranchi, there are ruins of ancient palaces of the Rajas of Chotanagpur. Round the ruins of the palaces are numerous temples, one of which contains curious underground chambers. The temples and buildings are of carved granite.

There is an inscription on the temple of Kapilnath which bears 1767 *Samvat* or 1710 A.D.

The Nagavanshi Raja family of Chotanagpur had changed their seats from time to time to various villages, namely, Chutia, Khukrah, Doisa, Palkot, Bharno etc. Their seat is now at Ratu about 6 miles from Ranchi.

As mentioned before, Hinduism has spread even in some of the comparatively inaccessible villages of Ranchi district. At Tilmi, a small village, there is a ruined fortress, once the seat of the Thakurs, a subordinate branch of the Nagavanshi family. At the mouth of a stone well, a Sanskrit inscription has been found which mentions the dedication of the well in 1794 *Samvat* or 1737 A.D. by one of the Thakurs named Akbar "for the attainment of the four *Vargas* or beatitudes". The muslim name of Akbar for a Hindu is not intriguing as the Mundas had a practice of adopting foreign names. This will also show that Akbar was a Munda who had become a Hindu. Two other inscriptions, dated respectively *Samvat* 1722 (A.D. 1665) and *Samvat* 1739 (A.D. 1682) and written in hand were found at village Borio about 5 miles north-east of Ranchi. They mention about the construction of a stone temple to mark the founder's devotion to the deity of Madana Mohana. Translations and transcriptions were given in a paper by Shri Rakhai Das Haldar, a member of the Provincial Civil Service, in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1871.

Col. Dalton, in his *Ethnology of Bengal*, has mentioned that the Kharias worshipped the Sun God under the name of Bero and in praying to Bero they addressed him as Parameshwar, a Hindu word for god. The very adoption of the word Parameshwar clearly shows the impact of Hinduism. The Hinduised Mundas and Oraons abstain from most of the meats which Hindus consider

impure. The latter aboriginal tribe, the Oraons, are distinguished from the Mundas so far as their symbols of worship are concerned. The Mundas normally have no symbols and make no representation to their gods. The Oraons however, have some visible object of worship, though it may be a stone or a wooden post or a lump of earth. This symbolisation on the part of the Oraons may have been due to the impact of Hindu influence.

There are a few legends regarding the origin of the Jagarnath temple at Jagarnathpur. According to the aboriginals, an Oraon servant of the Thakur of Barkagarh Estate, within which Jagarnathpur falls, had accompanied the Thakur to Puri. The Oraon servant had become an ardent devotee of Lord Jagarnath at Puri and fasted continuously for seven days and nights. After a week's fast he felt hungry at about mid-night and asked for food when everyone was asleep. He muttered a few words that he was hungry and suddenly he saw a man bringing him food and water in gold vessels. Next morning the temple authorities found that the gold vessels, which were the property of the *Mandir*, were missing from the locked room. The servant came to know of the commotion about the theft and produced the gold vessels which had been left by his side. Every one understood that Lord Jagarnath Himself had brought food to him in the gold vessels, so pleased, as he was, with the Oraon's devotion. Next night the Thakur had a dream that he must construct a temple of Jagarnath and enshrine the images of Jagarnath, Balabhadra and Subhadra at Jagarnathpur. On his return the Thakur did so.

The second legend, which is more current among the non-tribal people, is that the Thakur was a devotee of Lord Jagarnath and used to go to Puri frequently for *darshan*. He was being harassed by the horse-men of the

Peshwas frequently and he prayed to Lord Jagarnath for help. The enemies were routed and after this the Thakur built the temple at Jagarnathpur. The third legend is that the Thakur had a dream in which Lord Jagarnath Himself directed him to build a temple at Jagarnathpur, which he did.

The Jagarnath temple at Jagarnathpur is built according to the model of the Jagarnath temple at Puri. There is a *Mousi Bari* (aunt's house) corresponding to the *Gundichaghar* at Puri. Every year the annual car festival is held at Jagarnathpur with great pomp and ceremony. The ceremonials follow the customs and ceremonials at Puri. On the *Rathayatra* day thousands of people congregate and the idols are placed with due ceremonials in the *Raths* (chariots). Just as the Raja of Puri ceremoniously sweeps the platforms of the chariots, the head of the family of the ex-Raja of Barkagarh sprinkles scented water and sweeps. After this the chariot is drawn by the excited men, women and children accompanied with loud music of drums and cymbals. The chariots with the deities of Lord Jagarnath, Balarama and Subhadra are taken to the *Mousi Bari* (aunt's house) where they remain for a week. After a week, on the *Uttaratha* day, the chariots are pulled back with the same festivities. The *Rathayatra* at Jagarnathpur is the biggest religious and social event connected with any religious creed in the Ranchi district. At the lowest estimate, about thirty thousand people visit the area and take part in the festival in some way or other. The tribals freely join in pulling the ropes of the chariots and worshipping the deities. As a matter of fact, the *Rathayatra* festival is exercising a very strong influence in Hinduising the tribals.

A very large fair is held on both the *Rathayatra* days

at Jagarnathpur and hundreds of shops are opened in which all sorts of commodities are sold.

The Chutia temples are relics of the glorious days of the Chotanagpur *Raj*. It is said that when the temple was constructed there were 21 monasteries, 21 tanks and 21 gardens in Chutia. This, however, seems to be a tall claim as the area of the village is not so large. Inside the temple is enshrined the idol of Shiva in his *lingarupa*. In the same cells there are images of Devi, Annapurna, Lakshmi, Parvati and Ganesh. The images of Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Krishna and Radha are enshrined on a big platform. Some of these images are evidently installed much later. The Chutia *Mandir* has undergone many changes in its images.

The construction of the Jagarnath temple at Jagarnathpur and the installation of the images of Radha and Krishna at the Chutia temple were followed by the construction of a beautiful Jagarnath temple at Seraikella in Singhbhum district. The latter temple is extremely popular and thousands of people visit it annually for doing *puja*. The same ceremonies as in Puri or in Ranchi are held at the Jagarnath temple at Seraikella. The temple was constructed and consecrated by the Ruling house of Seraikella.

In this connection it has to be mentioned that the cult of Vaishnavism has had a deep and significant impact on the people of Ranchi district from the days of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, in the 15th century, when that great Vaishnavite apostle of Bengal had travelled through parts of Ranchi district on his way to Puri to offer worship there to Lord Jagarnath. *Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita* and a host of other Vaishnava works describe the travels of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu through Jharkhand after crossing the Damodar river near Bankura. Wending his

way along portions of the Bundu and Tamar *thanas* and Ranchi, he passed through Chaibasa and then, following the old pilgrim road via Keonjhar and Jajpur he eventually reached Puri. Even today the people of Bundu and Tamar and other parts of Ranchi district refer to the *khol*, a necessary musical accompaniment for the *kirtan* as such, reverentially as *srikkhol*. Vaishnavism has such a hold here that there are many families of this area who declare themselves as Vaishnavas by caste. Even many of the tribals are *Kanthidharis* owing to the direct impact of the cult of Vaishnavism. Thousands of families of the tribals and various other castes of Hindus in Ranchi district are strictly vegetarian. Some of the tenets of the Tanabhagats, a class of purists among the aboriginals that came into prominence in the 20th century, are based on Vaishnavism. The Tanabhagats do not touch any intoxicant and do not eat meat. They have a high standard of values, of love and truth, and live in bonds of brotherhood with one another. They are very steadfast and rigid in their principles and when they joined the Non-Cooperation Movement they did so with a religious fervour.

Another movement of the puritans among the tribals, known as the *Safa Hor* Movement in the later part of the 19th century, could also be directly traced to the influence of Vaishnavism. The *Safa Hor* Movement wanted the people to live a clean life, abhor intoxication and be strictly vegetarian. The *Safa Hor* adherents believe in Gurus, respect and cherish fellowship and recognise love, peace and amity as the means to get nearer to God.

It is also significant that *kirtans* accompanied by *khol* and *kartal* are prevalent in many of the villages in the interior of Ranchi district. *Kirtans* are a gift of the Vaishnava apostles. The cult of Vaishnavism had a

deep impact on the Mundas and the Oraons just as the cult of Shaktism had influenced the Santals*.

It is in this context that the temple of Lord Jagarnath at Jagarnathpur occupies an extremely important position and could be described as a landmark in the history of religions in Bihar.

Instead of being surprised at the existence of a few old temples in Ranchi district, like the Jagarnath temple at Jagarnathpur or at Chutia, one should rather be curious as to why there are not more of them. Probably the reasons are that the *Khorposdars* and the tenure-holders were more keen to have family deities in their houses and so did not pay much attention to the construction of large temples. There are, however, a number of temples throughout Ranchi district that were constructed in the later part of the nineteenth century. Ranchi town has now got a *Durga Mandir*, a *Kali Mandir*, *Mahavir Mandir*, *Ram Chandra Mandir* and a number of Shiva temples etc. These temples are all built within the last 100 years. *Durga Puja*, *Basant Panchmi*, *Kali Puja* and *Shiva Ratri* are celebrated with great pomp and the Adivasis freely join them.

* Vaishnavism is clearly seen in many of the tribal songs repeated in their dances. An illiterate poet, Buddhu Munda of village Bahaikundi in Tamar P.C., composed verbally *Pritipala* depicting the lore of Lord Krishna and Radha. Two village school teachers reduced this to writing. Buddhu Babu died about sixty years back. Many of his other religious songs based on Vaishnavism are sung in festivals in the tribal areas.

20. HARMANDIR

Patna is a great place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs. It is the birth-place of Guru Govind Singh, the tenth Guru. Patna has a number of Sikh shrines, besides the famous Harmandir commemorating the birth-place of Guru Govind Singh. It is in a lane named Harmandirki Gali, opposite the Patna City Post Office and within the jurisdiction of the Chauk *thana*. The area was known as the *Haveli* of Salus Rai Johari in the 17th Century. It is said that Sri Nanak Deva, the first Guru of the Sikhs, had come to Patna and stayed at this place for several months.

The Harmandir temple is about 9 miles east from the Patna Junction Railway Station and Steamer Ghat, 2 miles north from the Patna City Station and about 12 miles east from the Patna Aerodrome. The place is well-linked by regular bus services run by the State Transport Corporation. Special bus services are run by the Transport Corporation on the occasion of Guru Govind Singh's birth anniversary. Rickshaws, taxis, ekkas and carriages are available at Patna City, Steamer Ghat, Aerodrome and Patna Junction.

Guru Govind Singh was born in a house near the Chauk in Patna City on 7th *Paus Sudi*, 1723 *Vikrami Samvat*, corresponding to 22nd December, 1666 A.D. Chronologically ranking tenth in the hierarchy of the Sikh Gurus, Guru Govind Singh combined the irrespressible patriotism of Mazzini with the organizing capacity of Garibaldi. He had an inborn revolutionary idealism and vision.

Six years of his childhood were spent in Patna. Ac-

According to the chronicles, a Hindu devotee, Pandit Shiva Dutta, and three Muslim noblemen and divines, Nawab Rahim Bux, Peer Arif Deen and Syed Bhikhan Shah, discovered in the child a divine gift and became his admirers. The local chieftain, Raja Fateh Chand, and his consort became so devoted that they consecrated to him their palace where stands today the Maini Sangat Gurudwara.

From his childhood young Govind Rai, as he was called, displayed a remarkable degree of leadership and inclination towards the arms. His father, Guru Teg Bahadur, toured Bengal and Kamrup provinces over a number of years and ultimately returned with his family to Anandpur, a township of his own making, nestling in the Shivalik Hills of the Punjab. The most formative part of Guru Govind Singh's life was spent at Anandpur, a place within a short distance of the modern Bhakra dam. Guru Govind Singh, as is well known, founded the *Khalsa* sect and the surname of 'Singh' was also introduced by him.

Over the sacred spot of the birth-place of Guru Govind Singh a temple was built. The present temple is a vast improvement on its predecessor built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, "the lion of the Punjab", sometime in the first quarter of the 19th century. This temple is considered to be one of the four sacred places of the Sikhs and a large number of Sikhs from all over India and abroad visit the temple. The number of non-Sikh visitors to Harmandir is also very large. It is almost a bounden duty of a Sikh coming to Patna for any reason to visit this temple on the very first day. The present five-storey temple was built during 1954-62 at a cost of fifteen lakhs of rupees.

The temple faces the west and its height is 108 feet. At its entrance there is a verandah 90 feet by 46 feet.

There is another verandah for the priests, 25 feet by 13 feet and, after that, there is a marble hall about 25 feet by 12½ feet. Here is kept an all-gold *palki* (palanquin), on which there is a picture of Guru Govind Singh, who was born in this room. The palanquin is a work of exquisite craftsmanship. A little unplastered spot, about 3 feet by 2 feet, is preserved as a memorial of the exact spot where Guru Govind Singh was born. The height of the all-gold *palki* is about 5 feet. There is a well on the right side of the *palki*, which is known as Matajika Kuan. It is said that once the wells of the locality were all salty except for the water of the well of *Mataji*. The ladies of the locality used to take water from the well which is in the temple. When Govind Rai was a child of four or five, he used to break the earthen pitchers of the ladies. The ladies complained to his mother that her son (Govind Rai) was in the habit of breaking their water pots. His mother gave some money to each of them to purchase a bronze pot. They did so. But when the ladies came again to take water, Govind Rai broke the pitchers with his arrows. They again complained to the *Mataji*. She became angry with Govind Rai and upbraided him, saying that he should know that the water of all the wells in the neighbourhood, except this one, was saltish. This story of the impish pranks of the child is very fondly related.

Near the all-gold *palki*, there are nine sacred relics of Guru Govind Singh which have been preserved. They are: (1) a volume of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* reverently called *Bara-Sahib* bearing the autograph of Shri Guru Govind Singh; (2) A contemporary oil painting of Shri Guru Govind Singh, called *Chhabhi Sahib*; (3) Cradle (*Paugura Sahib*), gold-plated, used for the child Guru; (4) Dagger worn by the child Guru; (5) 4 arrows used

by the child Guru; (6) *Goli Chakras*, *Khanda*, tigerclaw dagger, comb, sandals of ivory, all used by the child Guru; (7) Sandal-wood sandals of Guru Teg Bahadur; (8) A weaving frame of Bhakta Kabir; and (9) Album of photostat copies of the *Hukumnamas* (sacred epistles) of Guru Govind Singh.

At the centre of the courtyard of the temple stands an exceptionally long pole of *sal* wood about 80 feet high, covered with iron pikes. This flag-staff was presented to the temple by Maharaja Jung Bahadur of Nepal. There is an underground hall about 90 feet by 46 feet. It is for the purpose of shelter to the pilgrims who come on the occasion of the birth-day of Guru Govind Singh.

On the second storey of the temple the *Vedas*, translated into Gurumukhi, are read by the priests. On the third storey a museum is going to be established in which all the sacred relics will be placed.

So far as the architecture of the temple is concerned, the whole temple is built on modern lines. It is a magnificent edifice and marble slabs have been liberally used. The masons have been able to give a wonderful face-lift to the old temple. There is an all-gold *kalasa* on the *amalaka* of the temple.

The premises of the temple contain, besides the shrine, the *dharmashala* and the *langar* where the visitors could take their meal free of cost.

On the occasion of the birth-day of Guru Govind Singh a big procession is organised. This is attended by more than 2,000 Sikh pilgrims from different parts of the country and abroad. Hindus of Patna freely join the procession. The procession starts from Gaighat, near the Gulzarbagh Government Printing Press, and terminates at Harmandir Gali. Gaighat, it is said, was the first camp of Guru Teg Bahadur, the father of Guru Govind Singh.

Here also there is a Gurudwara. The *Granth Sahib* is placed in the all-gold *palki* on the huge truck. The truck carrying the *Granth Sahib* leads the procession followed by thousands of the devotees and visitors. The followers of Sikh religion sing the prayers of the Guru and recite the lines composed by Guru Govind Singh. There is jubilation all over with music and songs.

The pilgrims visiting the temple have to follow the rules of entering a Sikh temple and the head has to be covered and shoes have to be left out. They offer their respect to the *Granth Sahib* or *Bara Sahib* and offer *ardas* or *Kara Prasad*. This *prasad* is prepared in a special shop of the temple. No *prasad* is allowed to be offered from any other shop. Every day about 1000 visitors, including Sikhs and Hindus, come to pay their respect to the temple and get *prasad* (*halwa*) from the priest.

Regarding the facilities for the stay of pilgrims, there is a *dharamshala*, containing 55 rooms, on the east of the temple and a big underground hall below the temple. The pilgrims do not have to pay anything for their stay to the Managing Committee that runs the temple. They can stay there for five days without any charge. After that, the permission of the Manager of the Managing Committee becomes essential. They also get their meal free of cost from the *langar*. But generally the pilgrims make voluntary donations to the temple. At meal-time they get *chapaties*, *dal*, vegetables, *ghee* and *papad* in meal utensils. The utensils used by the pilgrims are cleansed by the local Hindu and Sikh ladies and they consider it to be their sacred duty and an act of service to the pilgrim guests. Daily about 300 pilgrims, including many local visitors, take their meal both morning and evening time. On the occasion of the birth-day of the Guru about 5000 visitors take their meal here.

As regards the routine of the rituals, the birth-place of *Guru Sahib* is daily bathed at 3 a.m. by *Ganga jal* and *Gulabjal* and this is followed by the offerings of *prasad arti* with the reciting of hymns by the priests accompanied by the ringing of bells. In the evening, at 7 p.m., *arti* is also performed with the reciting of hymns by the priests.

21. DEOGHAR

Deoghar (*Devagriha*), or the abode of the Gods, is the headquarters of the Sub-division of the same name in the district of Santhal Parganas, and is located four miles to the south-east of Jasidih Junction on the main line of the Eastern Railway from Howrah to Delhi. There is a small branch line of the same railway from Jasidih to Deoghar. The railway station at Deoghar is called Baidyanath Dham. Deoghar stands on an all-weather road connecting Calcutta with Delhi. Passenger buses run regularly from Bhagalpur, Dumka, Patna, Gaya, Monghyr, and other places in Bihar to Deoghar. Taxis and *tangas* are available at Deoghar. *Tangas* are available at Jaisidih railway station but not taxis.

Deoghar has a picturesque location. To the north of the town there is a wood called Data Jungle after a fakir; to the north-west is a low wooded hill called Nandan Pahar; and to the east about 10 miles away there is a low range of hills known as Tiur or Trikutaparvata. There are a number of small hills to the south-east, south and south-west. There are two rivulets Yamunajor and Dharua near the town. The countryside around Deoghar has an attractive set-up with undulations, water courses and small hills. The climate is dry and congenial and Deoghar is still considered a health resort in spite of the great congestion particularly due to the temple of Baidyanath and the location of the criminal and civil courts and a very large number of Government establishments. As a matter of fact, Deoghar is a far bigger and more important town than Dumka, the district headquarters. Deoghar or *Deva-*

griha has a large number of temples within the circumference of a few miles. The temple of Baidyanath or Shiva is the most important of all the temples and attracts a large number of pilgrims all the year round. There are three important fairs, namely, *Shri Panchmi mela* held in January, *Shivaratri mela* held in March and the *Bhadra Purnima mela* held in September. *Shivaratri mela* is attended by about one lakh visitors in the course of a fortnight. A number of lodging houses are available for pilgrims. The *Pandas* or the priests have also a large number of rented houses of their own where the pilgrims stay usually for one day.

The legends about the Shiva temple are various. One legend is that in the *Treta Yuga* the demon Ravana, king of Lanka (Ceylon), propitiated Lord Mahadeva and wanted him to come over to Lanka. Mahadeva did not agree to this prayer but told Ravana that one of the twelve emblems of His divinity, *Jyotirlinga*, would be quite as effective as His presence and that he might take it away on the condition that there should be no break in the journey and the *lingam* would not be deposited anywhere on the earth. The condition was that if the *lingam* was put anywhere on the earth in the course of the journey, it would be fixed to that spot for ever. The legend is that Ravana agreed to this condition and took the *lingam* and started his journey back to Lanka. The gods dreaded the effect of the *lingam* being established at the seat of the demon king. A ruse was devised and Varuna, the god of the waters, entered the stomach of Ravana and the demon had to descend to earth to relieve himself. Later, Vishnu, in the garb of an old Brahmin, appeared before Ravana, after his descent to the earth, and began to converse with him. Ravana requested the Brahmin to kindly hold the *Jyotirlinga* for a few minutes so that he could relieve

himself. Lord Vishnu readily agreed to it and, as soon as Ravana turned his back to relieve himself, he left the *Jyotirlinga* on the spot and vanished. When Ravana came back, he found that the *Jyotirlinga* was firmly fixed to the earth and realised that a trick had been played on him. He even tried violence to remove the *lingam* and thereby broke a piece off the top of the *lingam*. However, failing to remove the *lingam*, he made his obeisance to the *lingam* and daily he used to come from Lanka and worship the divinity. The spot where Ravana came down to the earth has been identified with Harlajuri, about four miles north of Deoghar and the place where the *lingam* was deposited is known as Deoghar.

The present nomenclature of the *lingam* is Baidyanath and there is a legend about it. According to the *Padma Purana*, a Brahmin in the garb of Lord Vishnu, after taking the *lingam* from Ravana, consecrated it in due form with water from a neighbouring tank. There was a Bhil present, who was instructed as to what should be done. The Bhil had informed Ravana as to the disappearance of the Brahmin. Ravana is supposed to have excavated a well with an arrow and brought into it the waters of all the sacred pools of the earth. It is said that the *lingam*, after the death of Ravana, used to be worshipped by a hunter Baiju, and the *lingam* came to be known by Baiju's name as Baidyanath.

The story of Baiju giving rise to the name of Baidyanath is more prevalent as a *Santhal* tradition. There is another legend to the effect that when Sati, the consort of Shiva and daughter of Daksha, committed suicide because of the discourtesy shown towards her husband by Daksha in not inviting him to a *Yajna*, Lord Shiva stuck the corpse of his wife on the point of his trident and roamed about in a frenzy of fury. Lest Shiva's anger and fran-

tic movements should destroy the world, Vishnu cut the dead body with his discus into fifty-two parts which fell in different parts of India and became *Mahapithasthans*. According to the legend, the heart of Sati fell at Deoghar. It is, however, peculiar that there is no shrine at the other fifty-one places to commemorate this occurrence.

Another legend is that, in the first age of the world, Lord Shiva manifested himself as a *lingam* of light at twelve different places under different names, and Baidyanath was one of those twelve places. Sati worshipped the emblem in the form of a *pandanus* flower on the top of the *lingam* and dwelt for a long time in a grove close by in order to worship it. This place is called Ketakivana. The temple of Baidyanath faces the east and is a plain stone structure with a pyramidal tower which rises from a square base to a height of 72 feet from the ground. To the east of the northern verandah of the temple there is a large vat into which flows the water and milk offered as ablution. The *lingam* is of a cylindrical form about 5 inches in diameter and projects about 4 inches from the centre of a large slab of basalt. It is not possible to ascertain how much of the *lingam* is buried. The top is broken and has uneven surface and the fracture is attributed to the story already mentioned.

There are different porches in the temple. One porch leads to the cell where the *lingam* is fixed. The second porch is in front with a row of pillars spanned by blocks of basalt and on the right side there is a sandstone image of a bull. There are bells fixed in the ceiling and pilgrims are supposed to pull the bell-ropes to announce their approach to the divinity. The courtyard has eleven other temples. The following is the list of all the twelve temples

and of their dedicators with the years in which they were dedicated, as ascertained by Dr. Rajendralal Mitra.*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Dedicator</i>	<i>Year</i>
1. Baidyanath	Puran Mal	1596
2. Lakshmi Narayan	Vamadeva	1630-40
3. Savitri (Tara)	Kshemakarna	1692
4. Parvati	Ratnapani	1701-10
5. Kali	Jayanarayana	1712
6. Ganesa	Tikarama	1780
7. Surya	Rama Datta	1782-93
8. Saraswati	Rama Datta	1782-93
9. Ramchandra	Rama Datta	1782-93
10. Vagala Devi	Rama Datta	1782-93
11. Annapurna	Rama Datta	1782
12. Ananda Bhairava	Commenced by Ananda Datta, completed by Sarvananda	1810-23

The persons mentioned in the list were *Sardar Pandus* (high-priests) of Baidyanath temple, with the exception of Puran Mal who was the ancestor of the Maharaj family of Gidhour in Monghyr district.

Dr. Rajendralal Mitra held the view that there must have been a temple at the same place at a very early date. It appears that the original temple was very old and Puran Mal really built the lobby and claimed the credit for the whole. There is an inscription which mentions that Puran Mal built the temple at the request of Raghunath and tradition has it that the inscription was forcibly put up by Puran Mal after he had the temple repaired. This claim is not conceded by the high-priest and does not find any local support.

There is another inscription over the entrance of the temple of Baidyanath which mentions that Aditya Sena with his queen, who had come from the Chola country near Madura in southern India, had built a temple of

* Dr. Rajendralal Mitra—*The Temples of Deoghar* (*Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Part I, 1883).

Vishnu and one Balabhadra had built an image of the boar incarnation of Vishnu. There is an inscription on Mandar Hill which mentions that Konadevi was the actual name of Aditya Sena's queen and she had a tank excavated there which is still in existence. The lines referring to the boar statue are engraved in characters of the 7th century A.D., which is also the date of Aditya Sena, according to the hill inscriptions. The origin of this inscription in the Baidyanath temple is, however, not clear.

In front of the main entrance to the courtyard there is a well called Chandra Kupa which is said to have been brought into being by Ravana and contains the holy waters of all the sacred pools on earth. There is a large tank nearby known as Shiva Ganga. Dr. Rajendralal Mitra thinks the embankment to the tank was put up by Maharaja Man Sing, Akbar's General. The tank is also known as Manasarovara.

The rituals followed here consist of pouring water on the *lingam*, smearing it with sandal paste and offering flowers and a few grains of rice. Offerings of money, in silver or gold or by way of other movable and immovable properties, have been showered from time immemorial. Pilgrims bring water for offering even from the source of the Ganga near Badrinath or from Manasarovara lake in Tibet. Hundreds of pilgrims worship the *lingam* and lie down on the bare pavement of the verandah till next morning for fulfilment of some desire or for the cure of some diseases. In the morning the pilgrims will arise, perform the worship, drink a mouthful of water from the vat and lie down and this will continue for three days and three nights. It is said that usually, if the pilgrim is to be redeemed, there will be a dream.

According to the tradition and legend, Deoghar has many other names such as Harda Pitha, Ravanavana,

Ketakivana and Haritakivana. The sanctity of the place has been particularly referred to in the Puranas. Pilgrimage to Baidyanath was well recognised in the Muslim period. There is an interesting account of pilgrimage to Baidyanath in the *Khulasatu-i-twarikh*, written between 1695 and 1699 A.D., which has been referred to by Dr. Jadunath Sarkar in his work on Aurangzeb. The account runs thus:—

“In the district of Monghyr on the skirts of the hill, there is a place named the *Jharkhand* of Baijnath (Baidyanath) sacred to Mahadeva. Here a miraculous manifestation puzzles those who look for the outside of things. That is to say, in this temple there is a *pipal* tree, of which nobody knows the origin. If any one of the attendants of the temple is in need of the money necessary for his expenses, he abstains from food and drink, sits under the tree, and offers prayers to Mahadeva for the fulfilment of his desire. After two or three days the tree puts forth a leaf covered with lines in the Hindi character, written by an invisible pen, and containing an order on a certain inhabitant of any part of the world for the payment of a certain sum to the person who had prayed for it. Although his residence may be 500 leagues from Baidyanath, the names of that man and his children, wife, father and grandfather, his quarter, country, home and other correct details about him are known from the writing on the leaf. The high-priest, writing agreeably to it on a separate piece of paper gives it to that attendant of the temple. This is called the *hundi* (cheque) of Baijnath. The suppliant, having taken this cheque, goes to the place named on it, according to the directions contained in it. The man upon whom the cheque has been drawn pays the money without attempting evasion or guile. A *brahman* once brought a *hundi* of Baijnath to the very writer of this book, and

he, knowing it to be a bringer of good fortune, paid the money and satisfied the brahman. More wonderful than this is a cave at this holy place. The high-priest enters into the cave once a year, on the day of the *Siva-brata*, and having brought some earth out of it, gives a little to each of the ministers of the temple. Through the power of the Truly Powerful, this earth becomes turned into gold, in proportion to the degree of merit of each man.”*

The management of the shrine is entrusted to a head priest. The post of the head priest (*Sardar Panda*) is held to be hereditary but he has to be over forty years of age. There had been some important litigations involving the high-priest and the other *Pandas* regarding the control of the temple. In civil suit No. 18, of 1897, the Additional Judge of Burdwan (the district was in Bengal at that time and under the jurisdiction of the Burdwan court) had dismissed the existing head *Panda* as unfit and disqualified him from holding the post of *Sardar Panda* and trustee of the temple at Baidyanath. The Additional Judge decreed that three persons are to be appointed to look after the temple and its properties and for the proper administration of the same and the scheme also set forth the duty of the *Sardar Panda*, who was to be a descendant of Ram Dutt Jha. This scheme in a broad sense is still functioning and the administration of the temple is vested in a Council of Trustees which includes the high-priest and other *Pandas* as well as laymen.

There are more than 300 families of *Pandas* who all belong to a branch of the Maithil Brahmans. They help the pilgrims in performing the various ceremonies connected with the worship of God. One of the *Pandas* of Deoghar had taken a considerable part in the Non-co-opera-

* Dr. Sir Jadunath Sarkar, *India of Aurangzeb* (1901).

tion movement and had become the Chief Minister of Bihar under the Congress regime from 1961 to 1963. Some of the sons of the *Panda* families have also become lawyers, doctors, teachers etc. Deoghar has also a few other recent Hindu religious institutions which may be briefly mentioned. A *Yogic* Sadhu of Maharashtrian origin, Sri Balanand Brahmachari, hailing from Ujjain, had established an *ashram* at Tapoban, a hillock at the outskirts of Deoghar. Later, he transferred his activities to the Karnibad portion of Deoghar town itself. He passed away in June, 1937, leaving thousands of disciples. A number of religious, educational and charitable institutions are run by a Trust. There are two temples in the campus which draw a crowd of pilgrims all round the year. The Ram Krishna Vidyapith at Deoghar, sponsored in 1922, has now become quite a big institution. There is a Dev Sangh Math, established in Deoghar town by Shri Baba Narendra Brahmachari which has also a number of disciples. The main deity in the temple at this Math is called Haimabati. There are also images of Sri Krishna, Sri Annapurna and Sri Maheshwara.

22. SINGHESHWARSTHAN

The cult of Saivism has found expression in Bihar in a large number of Shiva temples and particularly on the districts bordering Nepal. North Bihar districts, namely, Champaran, Saran, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga and Saharsa have got quite a few Shiva temples. The influence of Nepal, where Saivism has a very great hold, is clearly one of the reasons why there are so many Shiva temples in these border districts. Many of these Shiva temples are visited by thousands of pilgrims from Nepal. The Singheshwar temple at the village Singheshwar in Saharsa district is one of the ancient Shiva temples in Bihar. It is visited by lakhs of pilgrims in the course of a year although it is not very easily accessible from the other parts of Bihar.

The district of Saharsa has been ravaged for decades by the Kosi river. Saharsa has a railway connection with Mansi on the Sonapur-Katihar railway line of the North-Eastern Railway now, but a decade back the railway line was permanently breached at quite a few places. Even now the nearest railway station for Singheshwar is Madhipura about 8 miles away. The road connecting Madhipura to Saharsa is still extremely bad and passenger buses can negotiate it only in fair weather. On all important roads there are quite a few culverts which have not got bridges.

The standard of health in the area has been extremely poor till recently due to the constant, unpredictable flood ravages of the Kosi. Kala-azar, malaria, blackwater fever, hookworm, dysentery, skin diseases, were some of the scourges which took a heavy toll every year. The Kosi currents, they say, would poison anything that would be

touched. Fertile plains yielding good crops were covered with sand by the change of current of the Kosi. Mango orchards literally dried up after the Kosi water inundated them. Most of the villages of Saharsa district remained water-logged for most of the year. There were hardly any long-distance roads and the pathways could be negotiated by bullock-carts only. Kosi floods frustrated the people and made them listless fatalists. Their songs, folk literature etc. evolved round the dreaded mother Kosi. Their children could not be easily married as people in non-Kosi areas would not give their children in marriage to parties in the Kosi region. Mothers would sing lullaby songs to the children that if they do not behave, Kosi mother would come and sweep them away. The writer has seen young children tied up to a post on the verandahs of huts by the Kosi river as no one knew when the Kosi flood would come. Kosi has been known to change her course quite a few times and has devastated thousands of acres of land. *Kans* and *Pater*, peculiar kinds of thick long grasses with rapidly spreading roots would grow and turn fertile fields into jungle patches harbouring wild boar and deer. Hundreds of these animals will come out even in daytime and eat away the small patches of crops that might have been raised. The poverty of the better class people and the economic emaciation of the common man encouraged anti-social elements, and heinous crimes have been quite common for the last one century. Due to very bad communications control of crime is a difficult problem. Three hospitals are the only places in the district where a post-mortem examination could be held. Post-mortem on putrid bodies, if held days after life has become extinct, can hardly be an aid to investigation. Administrative headquarters of the subdivisions and courts had to be shifted several times because of the Kosi inundation. Towns were sought

to be protected in vain by ring bunds after ring bunds.

But Saharsa district has not been so dismal always. The great temple of Singheshwar at one end of the district could not have been there otherwise. Saharsa was once the granary of North Bihar with fertile lands, plenty of food crops and mangoes. The water-communication brought boats laden with merchandise to the villages. Nathpur, Bhaptihahi, Nirmali were prosperous villages with flourishing trade and commerce. The first two have completely disappeared and half of Nirmali has gone into the Kosi bed. Before many of the railway sections were washed away some of the areas could export jute and foodgrains. There were indigo plantations owned by Europeans at one time in various pockets of the district and they did quite good business and lived in peace and amity with the people. One of them, John Christian, composed many *bhajans* in Hindi. This area has produced earlier a large number of poets and philosophers. One of them, Mandan Mishra, lived at Maheshi village and had a great philosophic discussion with Sankaracharya. There are quite a few old seats of temples scattered throughout the district.

But all this dismal picture is likely to change as the Kosi has been chained in 1963 by an immense barrage and the flood water will now be running through canals for irrigation purposes. Lakhs of acres of land in Nepal and the districts of India like Saharsa, Purnea and Darbhanga will be irrigated. Roads are being constructed and the railway communication is being made more secure. It is expected that the economy of the district will substantially change in the course of a decade from now.

It speaks a lot for the religiosity of Hindu India that in spite of the generations of the people of this district fighting against death, disease, starvation and frustration, the Mahadeo temple at Singheshwar acted as a beacon light

and a source of inspiration by drawing pilgrims in their myriads from even far beyond the confines of Saharsa district. In the shattered economy of the district the money that the pilgrims spent in the temple at Singheshwarsthan and in the district was a great boon. It is to be noted that the flow of pilgrims to Singheshwarsthan had never stopped and on *Shivaratri* day thousands of visitors have always been visiting the temple.

The temple of Mahadeo at Singheshwar village in Madhipura subdivision in Saharsa district is commonly accepted as very ancient. According to the legend prevalent in the area, the Shiva linga was installed by Sringa Rishi who had performed the *Putreshti Yajna* for king Dasaratha. The legend has induced a number of barren women to pay a daily visit to the temple. The present temple over the ancient *lingam* was constructed about two hundred years back by a merchant of Bhagalpur by the name of Hari Charan Choudhury.

Barah Puran has a story as follows:—Once upon a time Lord Shiva went to a forest called Slesh Atmak and told Nandishwar that he should not divulge to anybody where he had gone. Lord Indra with Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu went to Mount Munjwan and asked Nandishwar where Lord Shiva had gone. As Nandishwar did not tell them of Lord Shiva's whereabouts, these three gods went to the Slesh Atmak forest in search of him. There Lord Shiva took the form of a deer. Recognising him, they ran to catch hold of him. Indra caught the front portion of the horn of the deer, Brahma its middle portion, and the root was caught by Lord Vishnu. The horn broke into three pieces and the deer disappeared. Then they heard a voice from the heaven addressed to them to the effect that they would not be able to find Lord Shiva and that they were to rest satisfied with the portion of

the horn in their hands. Lord Indra established the portion of the horn, which had fallen into his hand, in heaven. Lord Brahma established it at that very place. Both these parts came to be known as *Kokaran*. Lord Vishnu established on earth what had fallen into his hand, for the good of humanity, and this place came to be known as Singheshwar.

Two of the boundaries of Singheshwar mentioned in the *Barah Puran* are north of Mandrachal and south of Munjwan Shikhar. Mandar Hill of Bhagalpur district is commonly accepted as the Mandrachal and the present temple is to the north of Mandar Hill. Munjwan Shikhar stands for a peak in the Himalayas and the Mahadeo temple is south of it.

Some time back in 1937 there was a title suit between the *pandas* of the temple and the people. The *pandas* had claimed the temple to be their private property and contested that it was not a public one. According to them, two of their ancestors, Anant Thakur and his brother Mahesh Thakur, had set up the *lingam*. The *pandas*, however, conceded that the original temple had fallen down and the present temple was built by Hari Charan Choudhury, but they continued in their private possession. This contention of the *pandas* was, however, rejected in the Civil Court and the temple was declared to be a public property. The Maharajadhiraj of Darbhanga had assigned a neighbouring village, Gouripur, to the deity. According to the Judge's order, in 1945, a Trust Committee was formed and the *pandas* were instructed to act as the *pujari* of the deity under the Manager to be appointed by the Trust Committee. It was decided, further, that, after meeting all the expenditure for the maintenance of the temple and the observance of the ceremonies, a certain portion of the income will be set apart and the rest will

be divided among the fourteen families of the *pandas* according to their accepted shares. The temple was brought under the control of the State Government from 1957, when the Religious Trust Act was passed. Now there is a Committee set up by the Religious Trust Board and the Sub-divisional Officer of Madhipura is the President. The *pandas* are also represented in the Committee.

On a common estimate near about three lakhs of pilgrims visit the temple every year. The amenities for a place visited by lakhs of people are, however, poor. There is a *dharmshala* which can accommodate only about 100 persons. At the time of the *mela* a number of tents and sheds are provided by the Government. The bulk of the floating population of thousands daily during the *mela* time live either in bullock-carts or under the trees. Sanitary arrangements and water supply, along with the supply of electricity, are arranged by the Government.

During the occasion of *Shivaratri*, when thousands of people come every day to offer *puja* to the *lingam*, a large cattle fair is also held. This cattle fair continues for about 15 days and the turn-over of the cattle is said to be numerically second only to that of *Hariharkshetra mela* at Sonapur in Saran District.

There is nothing specially striking about the architectural beauty in the construction of the temple. Within the temple compound there are various other constructions and particularly a small temple of Ram Janki set up by one Raghubar Das decades before. There is also a *samadhi* of another saint, Bir Bharati, in one corner of the compound. Some of the door frames and platforms were constructed as gifts from pilgrims.

There are 14 families of *pandas* associated with this temple. It is peculiar that none of the boys of these families has yet taken to higher education. Some of them are

quite affluent, having large landed property, besides their income from the temple. These *pandas*, are, however, comparatively not so rich as the *pandas* of Gaya or Deoghar Vaidyanath Dham. The treatment meted out by the *pandas* to the pilgrims is quite good.

It is found that none of the 14 families of the *pandas* has produced a teacher, a lawyer, a doctor or an engineer. Even the economically poorer *panda* families stand on a false sense of prestige and do not want to do any other work excepting that connected with the temple. The relative inaccessibility of Singheshwarsthan stands in the way of the economic betterment of the *pandas* or in the improvement of the amenities for the pilgrims. The place is not directly linked up by road or railway as in the case of Vaidyanath Dham or Puri Jagannath or Varanasi. The flow of pilgrims is mostly from within the district, excepting on the big occasions like *Shivaratri*, unlike the repeated visits paid to Varanasi or Vaidyanath Dham. A pilgrim from outside the district rarely repeats his visit to Singheswarsthan in spite of the great sanctity of the place. The *pandas* of Singheshwarsthan, as a rule, do not own separate houses where pilgrims could be lodged. The Trust Committee does not find a large enough surplus from where a good pilgrim house could be constructed.

23. MAHABODHI

The background of the famous Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya near Gaya has to be indicated.

According to accepted testimony, Gautama Buddha's birth and death could be placed between 560 B.C. and 480 B.C. There are a very large number of mythical and legendary stories regarding the Buddha. This is partially due to the fact that Buddhist literature grew later than the Buddha and statements, traditions and legends have been freely ascribed to Buddha personally. Through passage of time they have acquired a certain degree of sanctity throughout the world. Another reason is the decline of the creed of Buddhism in India from around the 6th century A.D. It is a paradox that, while Buddhism claims more religious adherents today in the world than any other religion, in its land of origin, i.e., India, there are very few Buddhists* and they are mostly from other countries. The spread of Buddhism in different countries, namely, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon, China, Japan, Malaya, Cambodia, Afganistan, Indonesia, Thailand etc., and its infiltration to different parts of Europe have been a very marked feature and the Buddhist scriptures have had different shapes in different countries.

Buddha was born as a prince in a small principality of the Sakya clan at Kapilavastu on the borders of Nepal. His name was Siddhartha and he was also called Gautama or Sakyasinha after the section of the Sakya clan to which he belonged. His father was Sudhodana and mother

* There has been a spurt in the last one decade, particularly in Maharashtra.

Mayadevi. According to accepted tradition, Mayadevi died a week after the birth of the child and her sister Mahaprajapati brought up the child. Afraid of distinct religious trends in the boy, Suddhodana took great care to surround him with worldly pleasures. Siddhartha was married to Yasodhara. In spite of all attempts to shut out the sights of miseries of the world from the eyes of the prince, he is supposed to have seen four of them that turned his mind all the more towards the quest of peace and truth. It is said that, going out of the palace, he met a decrepit man worn with age, a very sick person and a funeral procession. These three sights had already filled his mind with deep thought, when he saw the fourth sight and that was of a sublime ascetic who was the picture of peace and happiness. A son was born to him but Siddhartha's mind was too full now to be swayed by worldly pleasures and he left his home and changed his robes for those of an ascetic at the age of 29.

In the quest of peace and truth, Siddhartha first came in touch with two Yogins, Arada Kalama and Udraka Ramputra. But the severe asceticism they prescribed did not bring him any peace or truth. Gautama left them and came to Gaya in the Magadha country (part of modern Bihar State) and practised austerities near Brahma Yoni Hill in Gaya. But he found no solace. Ultimately he left Gaya and went to the neighbouring village of Uruvila (modern Uraila) and for several years, along with his five disciples, followed a life of meditation and severe austerity. But he did not succeed in getting any spiritual salvation and decided to take food. He accepted the offerings of *payas* (rice cooked in milk) by Sujata, the daughter of a village chief. His five disciples left him in disgust and went away to Rishipatan (modern Sarnath).

After gaining some physical strength, Gautama, as

he was called by them, sat down under a *Bodhi* (peepal) tree, facing the east, deeply concentrated on meditation. The story is that a grass-cutter, Sottiya, gave him a bundle of grass on which he sat, determined not to move till he got salvation. We have the commonly accepted legend that Mara, the god of evil spirits, tried to entice him away by offerings of worldly pleasures, but Gautama was not moved. After some time Gautama obtained the supreme enlightenment (*Samma Sambodhi*) and became the Buddha.

He passed a few weeks more at the village Uruvila, which is now known as Bodh Gaya or Buddha Gaya. His mind was torn with the ideas as to whether he should keep the supreme knowledge he had obtained to himself or he should share it with others. It is said that, during this period of mental turmoil, for one week continuously he was to look intently at the *Bodhi* tree, under which he had obtained the supreme enlightenment. For another week he would walk to and fro deeply engrossed in his thoughts. Yet another week he would go round a particular place or be absorbed in meditation. A mythical story has been introduced here that Muchalinda, the king of serpents, spread his hood on Buddha's head to protect him from rain and sun when he would be lost to the world in meditation.

Buddha decided to share with the world his spiritual knowledge and the way to obtain peace and serenity. His mind turned to his five disciples who had left him in disgust when he decided to take food, so as not to impose unnecessary austerity on the physique. Buddha went to Rishipatan and reclaimed his five disciples. At Rishipatan (modern Sarnath near Varanasi) he delivered his first sermon and set in motion "the Wheel of the Law" (*dharma-chakra-pravartana*).

The next 43 years Buddha spent preaching his creed. He was a tireless wandering missionary, and only in the rainy season he would retire to a cave or to a garden with his disciples. In the course of his religious tours he had visited Rajgriha, Nalanda, Pataliputra, Sravasti, Kosambi, Vaishali, and a number of other places which were very important in the political map of India at that time. At Rajgriha he had converted two disciples, Sariputra and Maudgalyayana. These two disciples and Ananda, who has been described as the St. John of Buddhism, had very great influence on the Buddhist community. Among the other important disciples were his two cousins, Ananda and Devadatta and two others, Anuruddha and Upali.

At the age of 80, Buddha shook off his mortal coils and obtained his *Mahaparinirvana* (ascension) at Kusinagar near Gorakhpur district in Uttar Pradesh. It is an erroneous belief on the part of many scholars that his death was brought about by indigestion due to the eating of boar's flesh. The original word is *Sukar Mardaba* which really means a mushroom which a boar loves to trample. Apparently, it was the eating of a poisonous mushroom that was the cause of his death. The great Buddha is said to have attained his *Mahaparinirvana* repeating to his followers that everything passes and has to come to an end some time or the other and that one must work out his own salvation.

The four prominent places in connection with Buddha's biography are Lumbini, the modern Rumminidai in the Nepal Terai, where he was born, Bodh Gaya or Buddha Gaya, where he obtained his spiritual enlightenment, Sarnath, six miles north of Benaras, where he preached his first sermon, and Kusinagar in Gorakhpur district, where he passed away. Buddha is said to have enjoined

that a visit to these four places is one of the obligations of a devout Buddhist.

It may be mentioned here that, but for the efforts of the Archaeological Department in the course of the last one century, these four places with their great relics may not have been available to us. Buddhist literature has fine descriptions of these four places, but the actual sites with their relics were slowly being lost to us. Lumbini had been visited by King Asoka and beautiful descriptions of Lumbini park have been given in various books in Buddhist literature. Fa-Hien in the 5th century A.D. and Hieun-Tsang in the 7th century A.D. had visited Lumbini and their accounts are available to us. But in a way it was left to Sir Alexander Cunningham, the famous Indian Archaeologist, to discover the site of Lumbini and that only in 1896 A.D. Cunningham found the fragments of the pillar, with the inscription thereon, which King Asoka set up at this place. Cunningham pieced them together. The inscription on the typical Asokan pillar that was lying in oblivion mentions that Buddha Sakyamuni was born here and that King Piyadashi Asoka had visited this spot. The discovery of the pillar by Cunningham fixed the identity of Lumbini.

Although Bodh Gaya did not have that darkness of oblivion like Lumbini, yet the great Mahabodhi Vihara at Bodh Gaya, so very intimately associated with Lord Buddha, had come to be neglected for centuries. This place had also been visited by Fa-Hien and Hieun-Tsang in the 5th and the 7th centuries A.D. respectively. Both of them have left accounts of the temples and other Buddhist relics that they saw. From the account of Fa-Hien one cannot say that he had actually seen the Mahabodhi Vihara, but he saw some temples and monasteries at that place. Hieun-Tsang has, however, given us a very elaborate description and he

appears to have actually seen the Mahabodhi Vihara. It was a tragedy that the temple of Mahabodhi Vihara, raised at the actual site where Gautama had become the Buddha, was lying neglected for centuries and the temple was almost in ruins. Here also the Buddhist literature gives us ample references to Bodh Gaya, the exchange of pilgrims, the sending of seedlings of the Bodhi tree to Ceylon and other places, but in the land of the origin of Buddhism there was no one to repair the Mahabodhi Vihara. When Buchanan Hamilton visited Bodh Gaya in the first decade of the 19th century, he found the place deserted and in ruins. A sect of Saivite Girs, a Hindu monastic order, had obtained possession of the Mahabodhi Vihara.

In the last quarter of the 19th century, the King of Burma had made a request to the Government of India for the restoration of the temple. The Government of India and Sir Ashley Eden, Lt. Governor of Bengal, deputed Sir Alexander Cunningham and Dr. Rajendralal Mitra, the great savant, who was also associated with many researches regarding the Jagannath temple at Puri, to restore the Bodh Gaya temple. The work started near about 1880 and the Vihara was restored to its original shape and size. That the work was done properly has been fully vindicated by the later finds of models of the Mahabodhi Vihara in the ancient capital of Arakan, an earthen plaque at Kumrahar near Patna and another model at Mathura in North India. Cunningham found and fixed the ancient relics like *Vajrasan*, the *Animeshlochan Stupa*, the *Canakamana*, the *Ratnaghara*, the famous *Buddha Pokhar*, several inscriptions and the distinctive stone railings, etc. It is only now, when they have been fixed, that one can appreciate the story of Buddha so far as Bodh Gaya is concerned.

In a similar manner, Sarnath, the place where Bud-

dha preached his first sermon, had become so very neglected that when Anagarika Dharmapala, a Ceylonese monk, visited Sarnath in 1891, he found it an abode for the grazing of the hogs and full of filth and jungles. The proper resuscitation of Sarnath is due to the efforts of Anagarika Dharmapala and a band of archaeologists like Sir John Marshal, Sir John Kittoe, Sir Alexander Cunningham, Daya Ram Sahni, and others. The famous lion pillar in the Sarnath Museum has given us the national emblem of independent India.

Kusinagar might also have been lost to us but for archaeologists like A.C. Carlyle, Vogel and Pt. Hirananda Shastri. In *Mahaparinirvana Sutta* and other Buddhist literature we have excellent description of the last days of Lord Buddha at Kusinagar, but the very identity of Kusinagar was getting lost to the world. It was A.C. Carlyle who discovered the broken pieces of the image of Buddha, depicting the scene of *Mahaparinirvana* and pieced them up. The inscription he found fixed the identity of the place.

In a similar manner, the excavations and the restoration of the hundreds of important Buddhist relics in various parts of India and Pakistan and their study have supplied authentic data for a reconstruction of Buddha's life and the story of his creed, as distinguished from the legends and myths that are associated with Lord Buddha.

We may briefly mention here some of the places in Bihar that are important to Buddhism and said to be sanctified by Buddha's personal visits. Naturally, Bihar, the land where Gautama became the Buddha, has a large number of places with important Buddhist relics. Some of these places are Barabar, Nagarjuni, Konch, Ganjam, Bakraur, Garpa and Kurkihar. But we have no concrete

evidence that these places were actually visited by Lord Buddha. One of them, namely, Kurkihar, has given us a very fine collection of bronze relics which depict the phases of the later Buddhism of the Pala period.

Among the other places that were actually visited by Buddha, Rajgriha comes first. Buddha had once visited Rajgriha before he had obtained spiritual enlightenment. Rajgriha was also the scene of his activities after he had become the Buddha. King Bimbisara of Rajgriha made a monastery there for the stay of Lord Buddha. Some of the references to Rajgriha in the very old literature of Buddhism, namely, *Gridhrakuta* or Vulture's peak, the *Velubanarāma*, and the *Saptaparni* caves, have now been properly identified. The first council of the Buddhist *arhats* was held by Maha Kassapa in the now identified *Saptaparni* cave at Rajgriha. This was done after the passing away of Lord Buddha. Buddha had also spent some rainy seasons in Rajgriha. Near Rajgriha is the site of the famous Nalanda University which became the most important centre of Buddhist culture in the later phase of the Mahayana school of Buddhism. For several centuries Nalanda University had attracted scholars from different parts of the world. This University is associated with great Buddhist scholars like Nagarjuna, Shilabhadra and others. Shilabhadra was the teacher of the Chinese traveller Hsien-Tsang. The University fell a victim to the Muslim zeal for destruction. Buddha had also passed through Pataliputra, the modern Patna. Pataliputra at that time was an important but small township on the bank of the Ganga river. Pataliputra was, however, destined to play a very important role in the period of later Buddhism. Pataliputra was the headquarters of King Asoka, who had sponsored the spread

of Buddhism, far and wide, to different parts of India and beyond.

On the other side of the river Ganga in Bihar, there are a number of places which are intimately associated with the Buddha's movements and with the visits of Asoka in a later period. Vaisali, which was the headquarters of the Lichchavis, was visited by Buddha. Asoka had subsequently visited Vaisali and had raised a pillar which is still in existence. Exploratory excavations at Vaisali have revealed coins, terracottas, seals and other ancient relics. According to tradition, it is at Vaisali that the beautiful courtesan Ambapali had made the gift of a mango-grove to Buddha. Vaisali is also the place where a century after Buddha's death the second Buddhist council was held.

The existence of a chain of Asokan pillars at Kolhua (two miles from Vaisali) in Muzaffarpur district and Nandagarh, Areraj, Lauria and Rampurwa in Champaran district in Bihar suggest that Asoka had set up these pillars to facilitate the spread of Buddhism. The important places in Bihar, associated with the later phase of Buddhism in the post-Buddha age, include Nalanda and Kurkihar in Bihar. Among the rock-cut sanctuaries associated with Buddhism, mention has also to be made of some of the specimens in Bihar. The rock-cut caves in Barabar, Nagarjuni and Umga in Bihar stand out prominent.

A particular mention has to be made here of King Asoka's edicts and pillars established after his victory in Kalinga. Being convinced of the futility of conquests and bloodshed, Asoka had set them up, many of which have been discovered and some may be found later. These edicts have so far been located at Dhauuli near Bhubaneswar in Orissa, Jayagada in the Ganjam district of Orissa, Girnar near Junagadh, Kathiawar, Kali in Dehra-Dun,

Manshira in Hazara district (West Pakistan), Shahabazgarhi in Peshwar district (West Pakistan), Sopara in Thana district of Bombay, Yerragadi in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh, Bairat in Jaunpur, Brahmangiri in Mysore, Gavi Math, Maski, Palkigunda (in Hyderabad), Rupnath in Jabalpur, Siddapura in Mysore, Kosambi in Allahabad district (later removed to the fort by the order of Akbar), Lumbini, Nigliwa, Mirnath at Meerut (later removed to the ridge of Delhi by Feroz Shah Tuglak) and Topra pillar (removed from Ambala and re-erected at Kotla Firuz Shahi, in Delhi). Besides these, we have evidence of the pillar set up by Asoka that had stood to the south of the principal *stupas* at Sanchi and also at Sarnath. In Bihar we have Asoka's pillars inculcating the greatness of Buddhism at Sasaram (Shahabad district), Vaisali (Muzaffarpur district), Lauriya and Arraj Rampurwa (Champaran district).

A few words on the political history of Bihar at the time of Buddha and the later few centuries will be helpful. Indian history from the 6th century B.C. onwards is based relatively more on historicity than legends and traditions. From this period we have more reliable evidence of big kingdoms and the currents of life and thought. The kingdom of Magadha was intimately associated with Buddhism. Bimbisara, Ajatashatru, Mahapadmananda, and later Chandra Gupta Maurya, his grandson Asoka, are some of the famous figures in Indian history closely associated with Buddhism. Asoka's rule was, as is well known, the golden age for Buddhism. His inscriptions are probably the oldest epigraphical testimony that we have. It is because of Asoka that Buddhism had spread to Ceylon and, later, to Burma. The present town of Patna has got great landmarks of the golden age of Buddhism.

The next eventful era for Buddhism was the age of

the Guptas. Fa-Hian and Hieun-Tsang visited India and Bihar. Harshavaradhana drove back Sasanka, the anti-Buddhist king of Bengal, who had usurped Magadha. However, it was also Harshavaradhana's age that saw the beginning of the decline of Buddhism. The later Pala kings of Bihar and Bengal patronised Buddhism, which had taken a peculiar turn by incorporating various beliefs and currents of thoughts. In the Pala age Buddhism was introduced into Tibet and there was a good deal of contact between Bihar and Tibet. The Pala kings have left a considerable quantity of Buddhist antiquities depicting later Buddhism in Bihar. Some of the later Buddhist deities from Tibet and Nepal appear to have been introduced into Bihar during this time.

Towards the end of the 10th century A.D., Muslim invasion had its impact on Bihar. Many Buddhist monasteries and centres of culture were destroyed by Mohammad Ibn Bakhtyar, military commander of Mohammad of Ghor. The eclectic creed of Hinduism also absorbed a portion of Buddhism and Lord Buddha was placed in the Hindu pantheon of Gods and came to be regarded as an *Avatar* (incarnation of Vishnu).

Mahabodhi temple

Buddha Gaya or Bodh Gaya, the holiest of holy places to a Buddhist, is 7 miles from the Gaya railway station. From Calcutta to Gaya by rail is a distance of 292 miles. Buddha Gaya is also very well connected by road. One has to come by the Grand Trunk Road to Dobhi and from Dobhi there is an excellent road to Gaya via Buddha Gaya. Taxis, rickshaws and horse-drawn carriages are available in plenty at Gaya railway station. Passenger buses ply from Gaya to Buddha Gaya and also direct from Gaya to Dobhi. There is no dearth of accommodation at Buddha

Gaya now. There are Dormitories, Inspection Bungalows and Circuit Houses at Buddha Gaya. A number of Buddhist Missions have set up their own monasteries near the Mahabodhi temple and Buddhist pilgrims can find accommodation in these monasteries too.

On the occasion of the celebration of the 2,500th birth anniversary of Lord Buddha, many great improvements were done to the temple and the surroundings. Buddha Gaya has facilities of electricity and a small bazar. There is a police *thana* and a dispensary as well.

Besides the Mahabodhi temple, which will be described later, there are other objects of interest which should not be missed. There is a world-famous sacred *pipal* tree by the side of the Mahabodhi temple. It is said that the present tree is in succession to the *pipal* tree under which Lord Buddha prayed and obtained spiritual solace. Saplings of this Bodhi tree have been taken with great reverence and installed in a large number of Buddhist countries. *Vajrasana*, which is between the temple and the Bodhi tree, is a seat of stone. It is said that this seat marks the actual site where Gautama sat and prayed and became the Buddha. The *Animeshlochan Stupa* has been erected at the site where Lord Buddha stood and gazed at the sacred Bodhi tree after the Enlightenment. The *Cankamana* marks out the spot where Lord Buddha used to walk in a pensive mood. The *Ratnaghara*, within the temple precincts, is the room where Lord Buddha would sit and meditate. 'The stone railing round the Vihara was set up by the Sungas. It is understood that there used to be a continuous stone railing all round the Mahabodhi temple. Now only the portions to the south and west remain. The visitors will also be attracted by a number of small carved stone *stupas* round about the temple. These were mostly fixed up when the temple was renovated. There is a large

tank for bathing to the south of the Vihara, which has now been renovated.

It has been mentioned that the Buddha Gaya temple, somehow, came into the hands of the Giris, a Saivite monastic order. Quite a few purely Hindu images have also been installed, at various places, in the Mahabodhi temple. There is a Pancha Pandava temple to the left side of the entrance to the Mahabodhi temple. The images are, however, of the Bodhisatvas. There are also a few *samadhis* of the Giri Mohants. The Saivite Mohant of Buddha Gaya was one of the richest Zamindars in Northern India. The Zamindari has now been taken over by the State.

The famous Niranjara river, often referred to in Buddhist literature, is to the east of the temple. According to the legend, Prince Siddhartha crossed the Niranjara river while on his way to the shade of the Bodhi tree. *Sujata-kuti* is the site of Sujata's house on the opposite side of the Niranjara river and now marked by a brick mound. Niranjara river is now called Lilanjan. According to the Buddhist legend, it was in this river that Gautama bathed and put his begging bowl on the water and declared that the bowl would go upstream if he were to become the Buddha. This is said to be what actually happened and Gautama knew that he was near his life's ambition. Gaya is on the left bank of this river at a distance of 7 miles. Gaya has the famous Vishnupada temple, where the Hindus offer *pinda* or oblations for the welfare of their dead ancestors. Buddha Gaya is also visited by the Hindu pilgrims where they repeat the ritual under the Bodhi tree specially set apart for this purpose. Vishnupada temple has a slab with foot-prints and the Buddhist think that they are of Lord Buddha.

The Mahabodhi Vihara, commonly known as Bodh Gaya temple is square at the base and cylindrical in body

shape. At the four corners there are four towers which are similar to the main tower in the middle. There is a vaulted passage through which one has to go to the shrine. The shrine has a massive image of the Buddha in a sitting posture. The statue is of black stone but has now been gilded by pilgrims from Tibet. It is said that the image has been set up in the very position where Lord Buddha sat determined not to get up until he had obtained supreme Enlightenment.

The temple is about 170 feet high on a 48 feet square base. On all sides of the temple are numerous niches and beautiful engravings and fine sculptured images of the Buddha.

There are various theories as to when the temple was built. According to some, the Mahabodhi Vihara was built by Asoka. Fa-Hian supported this theory when he visited Bodh Gaya area. A fuller description of Bodh Gaya is found in the writings of Hieun-Tsang who came later. A scrutiny of Fa-Hian's description throws doubts if he actually found a big temple at its present site. Fa-Hian has mentioned that there were four pagodas dedicated to Lord Buddha and at the place of one of the pagodas Buddha got Enlightenment.

Fa-Hian had based most of his accounts on the accepted Buddhist mythology. It can, however, be deduced that Bodh Gaya was famous near about 400 A.D., when Fa-Hian toured India. Hieun-Tsang's description of Bodh Gaya is fuller. He definitely mentions that, to the east of the Bodhi tree, there was a Vihara about 160 or 170 feet in height. He has dwelt on some of the figures that could still be seen in the Mahabodhi Vihara. He has also described some of the *chaityas*, railings, tanks, *stupas* and other relics. Hieun-Tsang (637 A.D.) has also men-

tioned that he saw the Mahabodhi *Sangharama* built by a king of Ceylon. This *Sangharama* is still there.

Without going into a scholastic discussion, it could safely be said that the Mahabodhi Vihara appears to have come into existence sometime after Fa-Hian's visit and before the visit of Hieun-Tsang in the first half of the 7th century A.D. This is the theory of Dr. B.M. Barua and others who have gone deep into the question. The fact is that there have been additions and alterations to the components of the great Mahabodhi Vihara, both by the rich and the poor, who had come to Bodh Gaya to pay their homage to Lord Buddha. The authorities have come to the considered opinion that, from the evidence of the inscriptions at the Mahabodhi Vihara, the date of the temple could be put down at about the 6th or 7th century A.D.

It is one of the paradoxes that such an important place, particularly for the Buddhists, came to be neglected and got almost buried under heaps of debris. It is said that almost half of the temple was filled with earth and rubbish. It is also peculiar that a sect of Saivite Giris came to occupy the Vihara. For centuries the temple was neglected.

Renovation of the temple

It must be said that, but for the interest of the British administrators in the late 19th century, the temple may have not been there in its present glory. Sir Ashley Eden, the then Lieut. Governor of Bengal, took up the question of the restoration of the Bodh Gaya temple in 1880. Master-minds like Cunningham, Begar of the Archaeological Department, Dr. Rajendralal Mitra of Calcutta and others were engaged in this task and it was due to their efforts that the Bodh Gaya temple was pra-

ctically restored to its original shape. That Cunningham and his collaborators were able to restore the temple to its original shape has been fully corroborated by later finds of the models of the Mahabodhi Vihara or Bodh Gaya temple at Mrohuang, the ancient capital of Arakan, an earthen plaque at Kumrahar near Patna and another model at Mathura in North India.

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THE AUTHOR

Graduating, with Honours in English and topping the list in History, in the M.A. examination, P. C. Roy Choudhury, M.A., B.L. (born February 10, 1903, at Cuttack, Orissa), has served in various Government posts of trust and responsibility. Specially selected (1952) to re-write the District Gazetteers of Bihar, he continues, though superannuated (1957), to function as the State Editor of the District Gazetteers. Trained, as he was, in research by the late Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Shri Roy Choudhury has by now re-written fifteen District Gazetteers and very ably too. It is a measure of his flair for administrative work, comprehensive research, tours, personal contacts, collection and collation of data, not to speak of drafting. He had occasion to visit Kathmandu, Jaipur and Bhubaneshwar, being officially invited by the Governments concerned for advising them on Gazetteer work. Shri Roy Choudhury has also compiled digests of old English Correspondence and other records in Saran, Hazaribagh, Gaya and Muzaffarpur and a research work, as well, on the 1857 —

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