

BUDDHIST PILGRIMAGE

Lord Buddha has stated in Mahaparinibbana Sutta, delivered by him in Kushinagar that

- (1). The place where he was born - Lumbini
- (2). The place where he attained the enlightenment - Buddhagaya
- (3). The place where he delivered the first sermon - Sarnath and
- (4). The place where he entered into Mahaparinirvana - Kushinagar.

Lumbini: Lord Buddha was born at Lumbini while his mother was on her way to parental home from Kapilvastu. Lumbini should be visited and seen by a person of devotion, Lumbini is the Mecca of every Buddhist, being one of the four holy places of Buddhism.



Buddha was born in Lumbini during the full moon day in the month of Baisakh in 623 B.C. he was born under a Sal tree (Shorea Robusta) when Maya Devi was going to her maternal town on the occasion of delivery. After birth Buddha took seven steps towards north and, looking in all directions, he declared that "I am the foremost of all creatures to cross the riddle of the ocean of the existence, this is my last birth and here after, I will not be born again".



This newly born Prince named Siddhartha had supernatural birth & signs, which indicated that the new born child will bring deliverance to the world. Ascetic (Rishis) warned the king that the boy might renounce the world anytime if he happens to come across:

- (1). the diseased
- (2). the old man
- (3). the dead body
- (4). the ascetic.

The king alarmed to hear this and married Prince Siddhartha at an early age and almost imprisoned him in pleasure palaces providing therein all kinds of enjoyments.

Location

Lumbini is situated in Nepal about 22 kms from Bhairahawa of Nepal in the foot hills of Himalayas. 122 kms from Gorakhpur city in Uttar Pradesh. 181 Kms from Kushinagar of Uttar Pradesh and 240 kms from Sravasti of Uttar Pradesh of North India.

BODHGAYA TOUR

A place where Lord Buddha left his footsteps nearly 2500 years ago while travelling in the quest of enlightenment, situated by the river Phalgu, Bodhgaya is one of the most important and sacred Buddhist pilgrimage center in the world. It was here under a banyan tree, the Bodhi Tree, Gautama attained supreme knowledge to become Buddha, the Enlightened One. The serenity of the atmosphere remains in the subconscious soul of any visitor who takes the village as a pilgrimage that the Lord himself had chosen for meditation.



There is a magnificent Mahabodhi temple and the Tree from the original sapling still stands in the temple premises. The temple is an architectural amalgamation of many centuries, cultures and heritages. While its architecture has a distinct stamp of the Gupta era, it has later ages inscriptions describing visits of pilgrims from Sri Lanka, Myanmar and China between 7th and 10th century AD. It is perhaps still the same temple Hieuen Tsang visited in 7th century.

Location

At a distance of 17 kms from Gaya, this highly revered pilgrimage is in Bihar. From the capital, Patna, it is 105 km away.

SARNATH

At a distance of only 10-km from the famous Hindu pilgrimage Varanasi, after attaining Enlightenment the Buddha went to Sarnath.

Lord Buddha had visited Sarnath looking for his five companions who abandoned him in Rajgir while they deviated from the viewpoint of Lord Buddha on self-mortification.

Here in the Deer Park, he delivered his first sermon, set in motion the Wheel of Law (Maha-Dharmachakra Pravartan). The Emperor Ashoka (c 304 - 232 BC), who spread the Buddha's message of love and compassion throughout his vast empire, visited Sarnath around 234 BC, and erected a stupa here. Several Buddhist structures were raised at Sarnath between the 3rd



century BC and the 11th century AD, and today it presents the most expansive ruins amongst places on the Buddhist trail. The ruins, the museum and temple are all within walking distance.

KUSHINAGAR

Kushinagar is another principal centre of Buddhism, worth a sincere admiration, is the place where Lord Buddha passed away at this place near the Hiranyavati River and was cremated at the Ramabhar stupa. It was once a celebrated center of the Malla kingdom. Many of its stupas and viharas date back to 230 BC-AD 413. when its prosperity was at the peak. In 543 BC, on a full moon night of Magh the legend delivered lecture to his Sangha and declared that he is going to leave the mortal world soon enough.



The excavations led by General Cunningham have revealed some antique artifacts and structures related to all sects of Buddhism. Kushinagar also expresses the common thread of all sects of Buddhism through its magnificent Viharas, Chaityas, temples and Tibetan monasteries. In ancient times, the town was also known as Kushinara and Kasia.

Location

Kushinagar is situated at a distance of 53 km west of Gorakhpur, in Uttar Pradesh, in the northern part of India.

Attractions

Mahabodhi temple - The temple is an immense attraction to the Buddhists, and stands near the Maha Bodhi tree under which Tathagat, or Gautama attained enlightenment. The total height of the temple is 170 ft. Its basement is 48 square feet and it rises in the form of a slender Pyramid till it reaches its neck, which is cylindrical in shape. It is a must visit not only due to its importance but also for the architecture and the art objects. The Shiva Lingam inside the temple was installed on 9th century beginning, is a splendid piece of sculpture.

Mahabodhi Tree - The tree is considered holy since Lord Buddha attained enlightenment under it , it is probably the fifth succession of the original tree. Anyone, who likes an ambience of serenity, would understand this place's surroundings to be perfectly weathered for meditation.

Vajrasana - The stone platform, where Lord Buddha sat in meditation while he attained enlightenment is known as Vajrasana. The place is restricted for any tourist activity on it; however, even the sight doesn't fail to excite the spirituality of the watcher.

Excursions

Rajgir - Rajgir (80 kms) was the capital of the mighty Magadhas, described in Mahabharata, during the 6th century BC. It is one of the most



important tourist places in India. Being located in a valley, Rajgir is a very scenic place. The attractions include the Ajatshatru fort, Shanti Stupa, Venu van, Karanda tank, Sonbhandar caves, Bhimbisar jail, Gridhkuta and hot water springs and the forestry. There is an aerial ropeway for adding charm to the tour.

Nalanda - 96 kms from Bodhgaya, The place where an ancient university, famous all over the world existed, which is 62 km from Bodhgaya and 90 km south of Patna. In this first residential international university of the world, 2,000 teachers and 10,000 monks students from all over the Buddhist world lived and studied here. Nalanda is a place to understand the cultural richness of India during 5th century AD. The excavations have revealed some very interesting facts regarding the ancient university, and the artifacts obtained are naturally a must for every visitor.

Gaya - Gaya is a Hindu pilgrimage place. Gaya is 102 ms rom Patna and 17 kms from Bodhagaya Bihar. Gaya is one of the most sacred Hindu destinations. The Vishnu temple is the central pilgrimage centre and people believe it has been constructed on the footprints of Lord Vishnu. Hindus believe that if a person's last rites are performed in Gaya, the soul attains Moksha, so thousands come here to offer the last rites and funerary offerings for their ancestors, every year. Main attraction is Vishnupad temple.

How to reach:

Air - Patna Airport is the nearest at a distance of 112 km. The nearest international airport is at Gaya 7 Kms. Air India , Jet airways, Kingfisher and Indigo connect Patna to Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, Ranchi, Lucknow and various other cities.

Rail - Gaya (16 km) is the nearest railhead.

Road - Well connected by roads to Gaya (17 kms), Nalanda (96 kms), Rajgir (80 kms), Patna (105 km), Varanasi (243 km), Calcutta (493 kms)

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