

# Documentation of Ganga from Prayagraumukh to Gangasagar

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**Saran District**



UNESCO

**Intangible Cultural Heritage**



# Documentation of Ganga from Gaumukh to Gangasagar

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Saran District

Intangible Cultural Heritage

July-August 2021

**Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage**

**National Mission for Clean Ganga**  
(Reg. Society)  
Ministry of Jal Shakti  
Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation  
Government of India



  
**INTACH** Indian  
National Trust  
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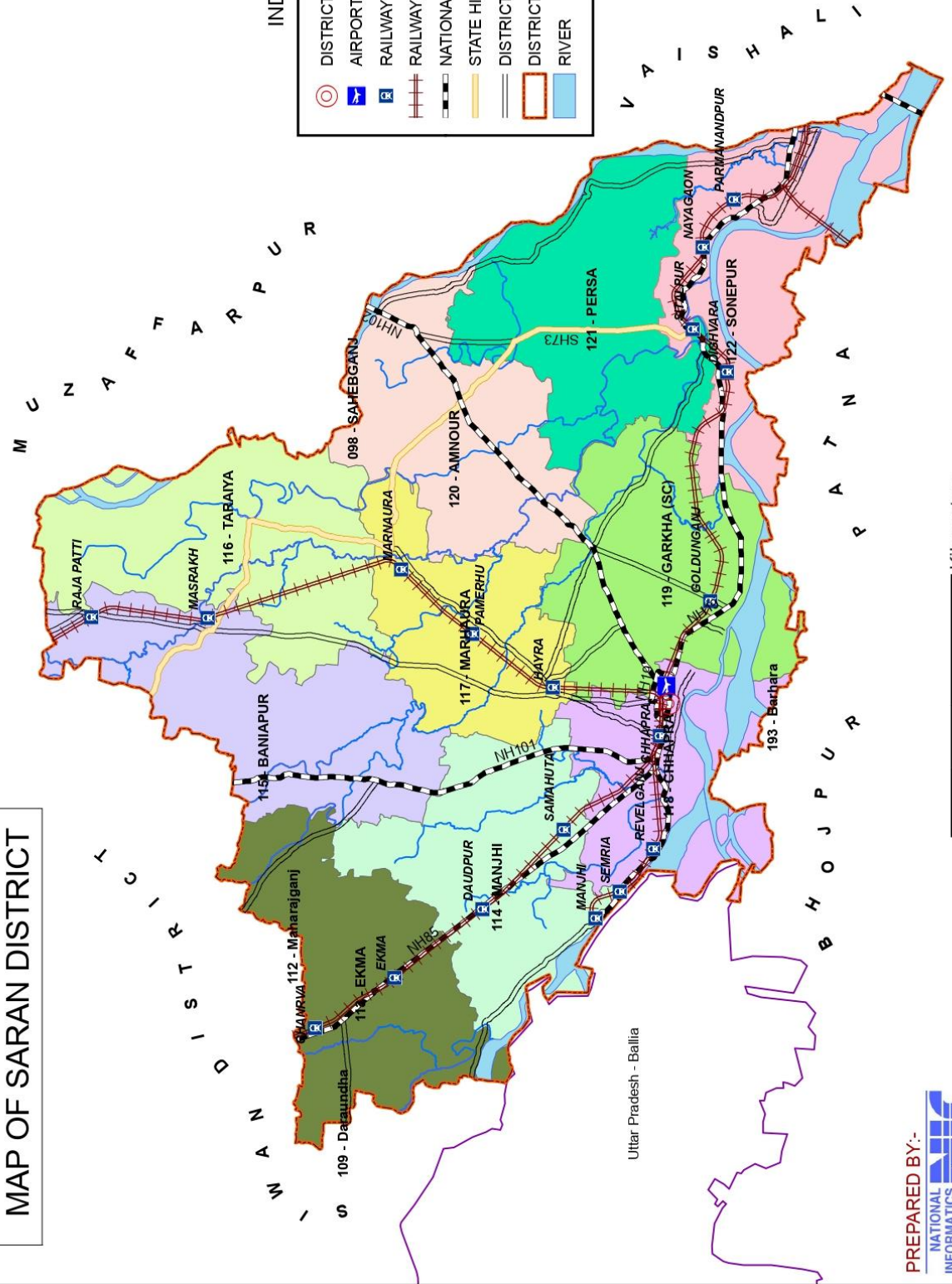


# MAP OF SARAN DISTRICT



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# History

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The history of Saran can also be traced by referring to its myths and legends, which describe the Videhas' occupation of the region. Literary texts describe this tribe as having marched eastwards from the Saraswati river until they reached the banks of the Gandak, where they were informed by Agni (God of Fire) that their true home was waiting to the east of the Gandak. Following his directions, the Videhas



Figure 1 Gandak river

crossed the river and established their kingdom on the eastern bank. Some members of the tribe, not keen on continuing the journey, settled in Saran, which was on the way. It is believed that the etymology of Saran can be linked to the term Saranga-Aranya (Deer Forest), as this region was said to possess wide forested tracts filled with deer in prehistoric times.

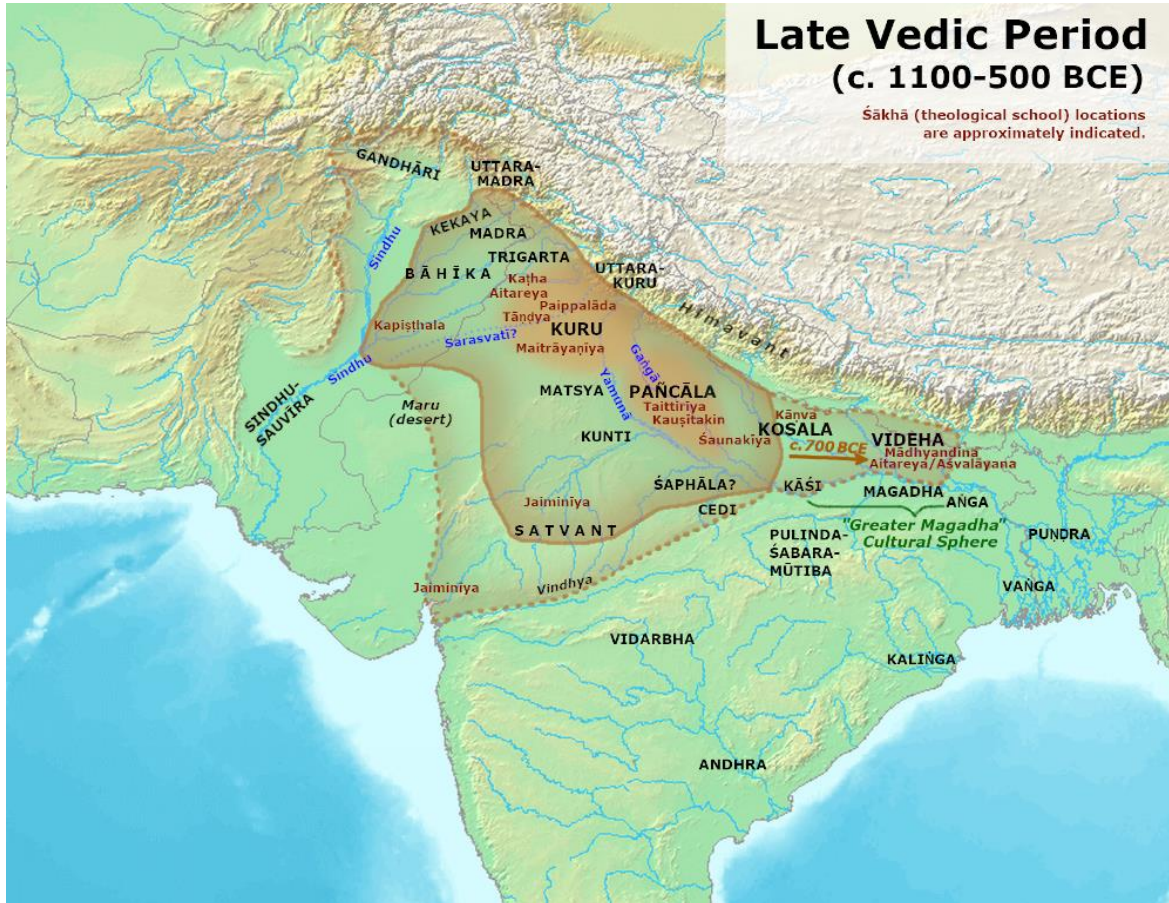




Figure 2 Neolithic Tools from Chirand

It is generally believed that Saran was occupied by aboriginal tribes like the Cheros, based on archaeological remains like mounds and the remains of fortifications, who were eventually driven out of the region by Aryan invaders. Others believe they were removed from their position of power by Rajput forces, expanding their power in this region. The latter point has more reliable evidence- family records of the Harihobans Rajput of Haldi (located in the adjoining district Ballia) states that their ancestors had settled themselves at Manjhi on the banks of the Ghagra in this region after a lengthy struggle against the Cheros.





Figure 3 Saran Stupa

Historical records begin to emerge with the rise of the Mahajanapadas of India, as sources indicate that Saran formed the eastern boundary of Kosala. There are some Buddhist myths about this region at this time which many scholars have dismissed as ridiculous but should be mentioned- the village of Chirand supposedly marks the origin of the ancient city of Vaishali, which Buddha visited frequently; and Siwan is said to have been built completely identical to Kushinagara, the site of Buddha's death.

Accounts of travellers like Hieun Tsang corroborate the evidence that Saran formed a part of the Chenchu kingdom (Ghazipur) by the 7th century CE. Hieun Tsang writes that this region was quite prosperous, and there was a degree of secularism as he encountered people following both Buddhism, Hinduism, and other local religions. He also described various stupas that had been constructed over time in this region, the most significant one being the Saran stupa or Asylum stupa (Saran literally means 'asylum', another possible explanation behind the district's etymology) built by Ashoka to commemorate Buddha's conversion of the cannibalistic tribes in the desert (described as demons in the story).

Alexander Cunningham verified the significance of the Saran stupa and stated that the reason it was also called Asylum stupa was because the 'demons' could seek refuge here of the Three Precious Ones of the Buddhist Triad- Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. It must be noted, however, that Cunningham later amended his views and stated that the Asylum stupa was found in Ara, located in Bhojpur district. Another important stupa was the Drona or Kumbha stupa erected over the kumbha (measuring vessel) at Dighwara village.



Figure 4 Sonepur Pitchers

A. C. L. Carlleyle continued mapping out the sacred sites in this district, following Cunningham's observations, by recording the details of a temple dedicated to Narayan in this district at an old village called Narayanpur, which was assumed to have been swept away by a flood of the Ganga. Carlleyle adds that the Asylum stupa was possibly located on an island in the Ghagra which was also swept away by a flood, but a more likely explanation is that the stupa was at Godna, close to Revelganj. He also discusses

the location of the Kumbha stupa, which he believes should be looked for among the mounds at sites at Chirand.

The earliest authentic monument located at Saran is an inscribed copper plate at Dighwa Dubauli. This is a land grant which records the grant of a village called Paniyaka in the Shravasti country by Maharaja Mahendrapala Paldevas, a religious donation to enhance the status of his parents. One Dr. Fleet has estimated that this artefact can be traced back to 761/762 CE, and Mahendrapala's capital was either at Shravasti or Benares, and his kingdom extended from Benares in the south to Shravasti in the north, from Allahabad in the west to Saran in the east.

Ghiyasuddin Iwaj Shah Khalji, the governor of Bengal in the early 13th century, began a long-drawn-out war against the Raja of Tirhut, which lasted from 1211-1226. Ghiyasuddin emerged victorious and Tirhut was forced to offer an annual tribute to the Sultanate. By the late 13th century, Nasiruddin Bughra Khan, and his son Muizud din Qaiqabad were embroiled in a succession dispute, and their armies met on the banks of the Ghagra. Fortunately, no blood was shed on the battlefield as a truce was negotiated between both parties- according to the terms of the treaty, Nasiruddin gave up his claim over the Delhi Sultanate but reserved the right to rule over Bengal as an autonomous kingdom.

By the mid-14th century Saran acknowledged the suzerainty of the first independent sultan from Bengal, Ilyas Shah after he invaded and sacked Tirhut, entered several prolonged conflicts with the Delhi Sultanate at the border region and built a fortress at Hajipur to consolidate his conquests.

There was a gap of a century of the Bengal Sultanate's hold over the region as it was taken away from them by the kings of Jaunpur, until eventually it came back under their control during the reign of Alaudin Husain Shah. Inscriptions from Chirand and different regions state that it was during his reign that the whole of North Bihar was formally annexed and became a part of the Bengal Sultanate.

By 1499 he ceded this region to Sikandar Lodi after he vanquished Jaunpur and signed a treaty at Barh which stated that Lodi held control over Bihar, Tirhut, Saran and all adjacent regions provided he did not invade Bengal. At this time, Saran was ruled locally by different Hindu zamindars, and in a bid to break up their power Lodi assigned several jagirdari assignments to his trusted officers. According to the source Wakiat-i-Mushtaki, Mian Hussain Khan Farmuli was appointed as the jagirdar of Saran and Champaran (earlier called jalkhet, or field of water). Described as a religious fanatic, Hussain Khan confiscated over twenty-thousand villages under the control of zamindars, adding them all to his jagirdar.

Nasrat Shah, Hussain's son, ignored the terms set by Lodi and invaded Tirhut and Ballia, adding it to his father's jagir. A mosque near Sikandrapur was built by him to symbolize his power, according to an inscription.



**Figure 5** Sonepur Excavation Site

When Babur and his men made camp at Ara, he learned of Nasrat Shah's forces encamped near the junction of the Ganga and Ghagra and took it as an act of intimidation. He immediately ordered the Sultan of Bengal to withdraw these troops as well as the fleet stationed nearby. When this warning was ignored, Babur demolished their forces through keen military strategies and manoeuvres. After pushing back the Bengal Sultanate from this region, he granted Shah Muhammad Maruf the territory of Saran and soon departed for Awadh.

Saran formally became a territory of the Mughal empire in c. 1574 after Akbar defeated the Afghans led by the Bengal Sultan Daud Khan and captured Patna. An Afghan chief, Kabul Muhammad of Barharia, was earlier given control over Saran but was later killed. Saran now fell in the hands of Jubraj Sahi, one of the first rulers of the Hathwa Raj dynasty, who was given the Sipah pargana as a grant by Akbar. Saran now became one of the six sarkars, forming the subah of Bihar. The formal revenue assessment of this region was conducted by Akbar's Finance Minister Todar Mal in 1582.

Saran did not have any other major historical events until the spread of European traders in India, with the Dutch East India Company establishing a depot and a refinery at Chaprain in 1666 for saltpetre,

which they exported by ships sailing on the Hooghly River. This refinery was reported to have been burned down in 1711 by a group of rebels.

In 1726, Fakhr-ud-daula, the Nawab of Bihar dispatched a force to Saran to oust Shaikh Abdullah. Abdullah was an extremely powerful and influential figure in Saran, trusted by both the local citizens and the zamindars. As Fakhr-ud-daula's troops approached, he was forced to retreat from his house at Azimabad (Patna) to the mud fortress he had constructed at Siwan. It was here that a siege began, and Abdullah sent word to the Nawab of Awadh, requesting his aid. When the relief troops arrived, he managed to break through Fakhr-ud-daula's camp and push them out of the region.

The British decided to make their presence felt in the region in 1757, when a small army led by Eyre Coote arrived in Saran as they were on the hunt for Monsieur Law, a man who propagated Siraj-ud-daula's right to rule Bengal. They reached Chapra on August 4th, and found out that Law had already fled to Benares; so Eyre held a Council of War in the region to decide on their next course of action. As supplies dwindled and the men fell sick due to the concentration of saltpetre in the soil, they finally decided that the best course of action would be to return to their base at Patna.

The second instance of British troops arriving at Saran was in 1763 after Ellis, the Agent at Patna, attempted to capture the district as a security measure when he believed that there was soon to be a conflict with Nawab Mir Qasim Ali. Hearing of this advance, the Nawab sent his troops to the region and pushed back the British soldiers, forcing them to take refuge in a factory. As supplies began to dwindle, the British concluded that the safest course of action would be to ask the Nawab of Awadh for aid and shelter. On August 29th they crossed the Ganga and marched towards Chapra, fending off the Nawab's pursuing troops all the while battling the elements of heavy rain and floods. Unbeknownst to the British, Somru led a contingent across Buxar in advance to intercept the British, who got as far as Manjhi before being fully surrounded by Somru and Ram Nidi's (Faujadar of Saran) troops.

Thus began the Battle of Manjhi on July 1st, 1763, where the British troops under Captain Carstairs suffered a miserable defeat. In the aftermath of the battle, many of the sepoys switched sides and pledged allegiance to Mir Qasim, while those who didn't had their weapons and supplies taken away. A few of the European soldiers switched sides as well, some managed to escape during the battle, and the rest were taken to Patna where they were executed.

Saran was eventually conquered by the British the very next year, after Shuja-ud-daula had been driven away from Patna by Major Carnac. Major Champion was selected to lead a retinue to Ghazipur, and on



June 2nd they arrived in Saran, which they formally annexed for the East India Company, as they made their way to the banks of the Ghagra to join another battalion led by Captain Galliez which had been dispatched from Patna. The heavy rains forced them to set up camp in the region- one battalion established temporary barracks in Manjhi (Galliez) and the other two in Chapra (Champion).

In September a brief mutiny erupted first at Manjhi, then at Chapra. The mutiny was instigated by a few sepoys, infuriated by the fact that the British officers had not fulfilled most of their promises. The mutineers first imprisoned Captain Ahmuty and then the other European officers and sergeants. Details are a bit cloudy as to what transpired afterwards, because the very next day the officers were released and the march to Chapra resumed, except for the sepoys who stayed behind at Manjhi.

When the British reached Chapra, a report of the mutiny was sent to Major Hector Munro, who immediately dispatched Captain Wemyss to apprehend the mutineers. Captain Ahmuty was asked to identify 50 of the ringleaders, and he pointed out 24 of them. These sepoys were tried and found guilty by a drum-head Court Martial and were sentenced to be executed in a gory manner- tied to a cannon and being blown away.

In 1766, Lord Clive, accompanied by General Carnac, arrived at Chapra after suppressing the White Mutiny. A conference was held where many important figures were in attendance- Shuja-ud-daula, Munir-ud-daula (Shah Alam's minister) and Raja Balwant Singh of Benares. A treaty was signed by everyone, who entered a temporary alliance to defend themselves against the Marathas.

The early days of British administration in Saran were unstable, mainly due to the rebellion led by Maharaja Fateh Sahi of Husepur, whose family had long held control over Saran. Husepur today can be located in the region of Siwan and Gopalganj, and it was then under the control of a government-contracted farmer called Gobind Ram. Fateh Sahi regularly conducted raids in Saran and almost every single time successfully retreated to his base in the Bagh Jogini Forest, lying between Gorakhpur and Saran.

Gobind Ram was killed during one of these raids in 1772, and the Collector of Saran recommended that Fateh Sahi be given an allowance and some of his privileges back as long as he ceased future raids. The proposal was accepted, and Fateh Sahi agreed to the terms, meeting with some British representatives at Patna and promising that he and his family would live peacefully at Husepur. However, in less than two months he broke the terms of the arrangement and went back to his old ways. Fateh Sahi managed to elude capture, but over time as the British became more and more organized and entrenched in the

region, it became difficult for him to maintain his lifestyle. By 1808, he ended his life on the run and chose to become a fakir for the remainder of his life.

An important point to note is that after the Battle of Buxar (1785), Saran officially became a part of the lower provinces of Bengal.

The situation in Saran was relatively mild for almost half a century, until the Revolt of 1857 swept across the country. Saran was placed under martial law to repress any dissenters, but this order had been illegally passed by Major Holmes and was repealed the instance the British government got wind of it. On July 25th, Holmes and his officers were killed by his regiment (the 12th Irregular Cavalry).

As the mutineers marched to Azamgarh, they reached Siwan where they burnt down the houses of Deputy Magistrate Lynch and Sub-Deputy McDonnell, who barely managed to escape. Upon hearing the situation at Siwan, the European residents at Chapra fled the city on July 28<sup>th</sup> and took refuge at Dinapore. They returned to the region on August 12th, surprised to find that mostly everything was still intact and the detachment of Najibs were still loyal to them, having been ordered to preserve Chapra in their absence by Kazi Ramzan Ali.

Problems began to emerge in October when 500 rebels, under the leadership of Muhammad Husain (someone who declared himself as the Chakladar of Gorakhpur and a servant of the Nawab of Awadh), plundered two factories in Saran- one in Darauli which belonged to a private contractor, Babu Ram, and the other at Gangua which belonged to a British merchant called McLeod. Hearing this news, a Gurkha regiment as well as a Naval Brigade under Captain Sotheby was stationed at Siwan. These troops pushed back the mutineers, and to alleviate the citizen's worries the Sonapur Fair was conducted in a normal fashion like it was every year.

In December Guthni was attacked by another group of mutineers. The 55 Sikhs in charge of the region fled, believing that a larger contingent was going to attack soon. A relief army was soon dispatched to Guthni, but the mutineers had already fled, making sure to burn down anything which might serve the British troops in the future. The British were not taking any chances, and by the end of December, Jang Bahadur had arrived with a Nepalese army. At one point the British soldiers feared that Kunwar Singh might arrive with his guerrilla forces, but he never included Saran on his roadmap of territories to reclaim on his way to Jagdishpur.

Saran played an important role in the freedom movement during the late 19th and early 20th century, producing influential figures like Babu Braj Kishor Prasad, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Jayaprakash Narayan, and many more.

It is interesting to note that at one point, Champaran was a part of Saran before becoming its own distinct district in 1866. Saran was subsequently made part of the Tirhut Division when it was created in 1908. There were three sub-divisions within this- Saran, Siwan and Gopalganj. By 1972, each of these sub-divisions were given an independent status as a district, and Chapra was selected as the district headquarters of Saran.

# Sacred Complexes and Places of Interest

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Figure 6 Dharmanath Temple

Chapra is the district headquarters of Saran and contains important sites like the Dharmanath Temple, Peerbaba ka Mazar, Ramkrishna Mission Ashram and Parvati Ashram.

Aami is located 37 km east of Chapra and 4 km west of Dighwara. In this site there is an ancient temple referred to as Amba Asthan, dedicated to Durga. Near the temple complex is a garden and well which has seemingly never dried up. It is believed that the two Maharajas Daksha and Surat practiced asceticism here.

Sonepur is arguably the most significant location within Saran due to the huge crowds it draws for the Sonepur Fair, held every year during Kartik Purnima, which continues for a fortnight. Major sacral sites in the region include the Harihar Nath Temple as well as the battlefield where the

elephant king Gajendra was immobilized by the crocodile Grah, before Gaj was rescued by Hari (Vishnu). Other religious complexes include a Shiva temple and a Kali temple, among others, which see a large inflow of devotees during the Sonepur Fair. Sonepur is also the headquarters of Sonepur Anchal, and it houses one of the largest railway platforms in India. Excavations in this region have also revealed a stone pillar dating back to the Sunga period (184-75 BCE) as well as statues from the later Gupta and Pala dynasties.



**Dhorh Ashram**- Situated north of Parsagarh, this site contains a treasure trove of artefacts. On the banks of the river Gandaki, the remains of an ancient temple dedicated to Dhadheswar Nath can be found alongside a giant Shiva Linga.

**Gautam Asthan-** Contains the ashram of Gautam Rishi, located 5 km west of Chapra. It is believed



**Figure 7** Gautam Asthan

that the ritual purification of the sage's wife, Ahalya, was carried out here.

Silhauri- Located about 26 km north of Chapra, it is believed that this is the place where Indra and Yamraja undertook a test organized by King Shivi, as described in the Shiva Purana and Ramcharitamanas.

Chirand- Situated 11 km of southeast of Chapra near Doriganj Bazaar at the northern bank of the Ghagra, this site has undergone several excavations which have revealed artefacts dating back to the Neolithic period. This discovery was made in the 1970s in the low-lying plains region, affected by the monsoon climate.

Revelganj- Situated on the Chapra-Ghazipur National Highway, this area contains several important temples like the Srinath Temple. On the eve of Kartik Purnima, a month-long fair called Godhna Semaria is organized annually.



Figure 8 Hariharnath Temple



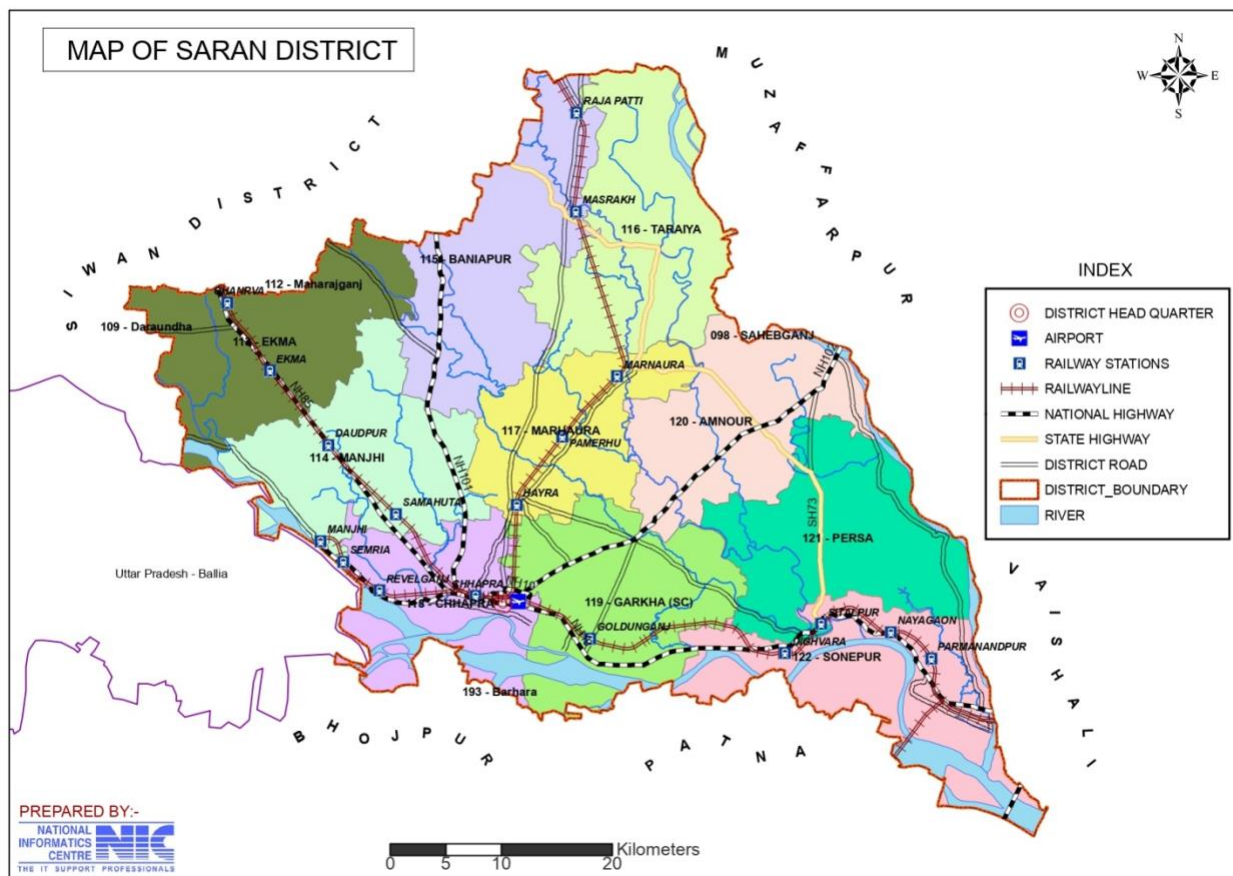


Figure 9 Peerbaba ka Mazar



# Communities in Saran

The census of 2011 divides the population of Saran into the religious categories of- Hindu (89.45%), Muslim (10.28%), Christian (0.06%), Sikh (0.01%), Buddhist (0.01%), Jain (0.01%), Others (0.00%), Not Stated (0.18%).



# Fairs and Festivals

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**Sonepur Cattle Festival-** Arguably the most important festival celebrated in this district, the Sonepur Cattle Festival takes place during Kartik Purnima in the month of Kartik (sometime between October and November) and is stretched out over a fortnight (although sometimes it has extended to an



Figure 10 Sonepur Cattle fair

entire month of celebrations).

It is said that the origins of the festival can be traced back to the period of the Ramayana, when Sonepur was beginning to emerge as a pilgrimage centre and the festival was initially referred to as the Harihar Kshetra Mela. In the 16th century, the festival's location was shifted from Sonepur to Hajipur, on the other side of the Gandak which was under the control of the Mughals. However, the organizers of the festival failed to consider the natural hazards, as the fairground became eroded due to the fluvial action of the river. Thus, the festival was shifted back to Sonepur.

The festival draws large crowds every year from all across the world. Even as far back as the 17th century, English traveller John Marshall wrote that people would arrive from the remotest corners of India to attend the festival, and among the crowd he even spotted people coming from the farthest regions of Central Asia. He estimated that around 50,000 people annually attended this festival during his time. By the late 19th and 20th centuries, the number increased to over 500,000 people.

Apart from the ritual oblations and ceremonial dip in the waters of the Ganga during Kartik Purnima, what really sets this festival apart from others is the cattle fair and trade. Although it was banned in 2000 under the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, the Haathi Bazaar (Elephant Market) of Sonapur would be thronged by merchants and interested buyers from all corners of India as well as abroad. While elephants can no longer be sold, they are still put on display for the duration of the festival. Most of the local citizens are worried that the festival will suffer from a sharp loss in income and popularity if the elephants are taken out of the equation. Despite the sharp decrease in the number of elephants present for the festival, they remain the biggest symbol of the event's history and tradition (sources have confirmed that even Chandragupta Maurya used to visit the festival to purchase several elephants).

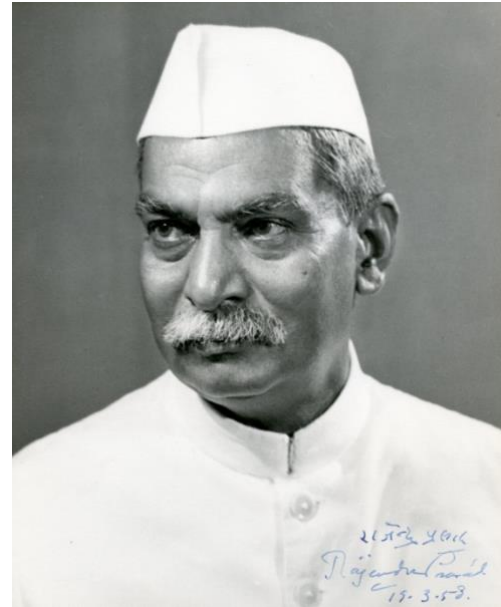
Another popular event which has been banned under this act are the horse races. Although horses are no longer raced, they are sold and bought in large numbers at the Ghoda Bazaar (Horse Market). In 2017, around 5000 horses were present in Ghoda Bazaar, but horse traders are worried that soon even Ghoda Bazaar might get banned, and the festival will have nothing left to attract people apart from the ceremonies and rituals.

In a bid to promote tourism, traditional Swiss cottages have been constructed in Sonapur to attract foreign tourists and give them some semblance of their home while they enjoy the festival. These cottages are found at Paryatan Gram (Tourist Village) in the English Bazaar area, a short walk to where the festival is held.

# Luminaries from Saran

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**Dr. Rajendra Prasad** (1884-1963)- A lawyer, journalist, President of the Indian National Congress (1934, 1939 and 1947), and the first President of India after Independence, Rajendra Prasad was one of the most prominent figures to emerge during the Independence Movement, taking part in some of the most important events like the non-cooperation movement.

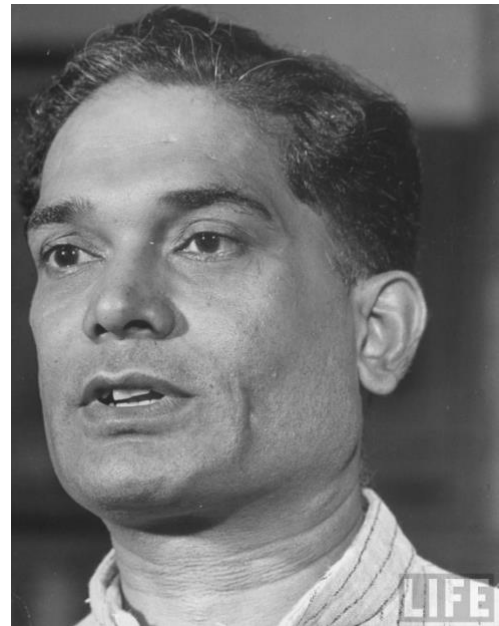


Raised in a modest landowning family, he graduated from Calcutta Law College and practiced at the Calcutta High Court, before being transferred to the Patna High Court in 1916, where he founded the Bihar Law Weekly. In 1917, Gandhi recruited his aid to solve the plight of the indigo planters in Bihar. By 1920, he gave up practicing law to join the non-cooperation movement. He also wrote several articles for the Bihar bi-weekly English newspaper *Searchlight* (it later became a daily in 1930), which he co-founded, and edited the Hindi weekly newspaper *Desh*. Due to his activities, he was imprisoned several times by the British government, serving nearly three years (August 1942-June 1945) in jail alongside the Congress Party's Working Committee.

In September 1946, Rajendra Prasad was sworn in as the Minister for Food and Agriculture in the interim government of India, and from 1946-1949 he presided over the meetings of the Indian Constituent Assembly, taking an active role in drafting India's Constitution. He was unanimously elected as the President of India in 1950 and, after the first general election (1952), was chosen by an overwhelming majority of the new electoral college. In 1957 he was re-elected to serve a third term.

One of the campaigns he strove to achieve was to get Hindi recognized as the national language of India. Rajendra Prasad wrote several books over time, including- his autobiography *Atmakatha* (1946), *India Divided* (1946), and *Mahatma Gandhi and Bihar, Some Reminiscences* (1949). For his lifetime of achievements and contributions, he was awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1962, India's highest civilian award.

**Jayaprakash Narayan** (1902-1979)-A prominent Indian politician and political theorist, JP Narayan received his secondary education in America, where he was introduced to the Marxist school of thought. When he returned to India in 1929, he joined the Indian National Congress and took part in several movements over the course of the freedom struggle. For his involvement in the Civil Disobedience Movement, he was sentenced to a year's imprisonment in 1932, and upon his release he co-founded the Congress Socialist Party, a left-wing group within the overarching frame of the Indian National Congress.



He was imprisoned once more for protesting Indian troops' participation in World War II but managed to escape from the prison. While on the run, he tried to organize a violent movement against the British but was recaptured in 1943. He was released in 1946, and he began to appeal to the Congress leaders to adopt a more militant policy against British rule.

Tired of the Congress' moderate policies, he, along with most of the Congress Socialists, left the party and in 1952 founded the Praja Socialist Party. JP Narayan became dissatisfied with party politics entirely by 1954, and became majorly involved in the Bhoodan Yajna Movement (founded by Vinobha Bhave), which campaigned for the distribution of land among the landless. While he may have left party politics, he did not leave the political arena entirely as he advocated for a four-tier hierarchy of village, district, state, and union councils in 1959, as a means of "reconstructing the Indian polity".

JP Narayan was one of the most outspoken critics of the Indira Gandhi-led government, and organized several protests filled with students and the opposition party. When the Emergency was called in 1975, Narayan along with many other prominent politicians and activists, was arrested. Due to his deteriorating health, he was kept under watch at the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) in Chandigarh. After the Emergency was lifted and the elections took place in 1977, the Janata party managed to overthrow the Congress and JP Narayan was consulted on almost all the decisions regarding who should be appointed in the new administration.



**Bhikari Thakur (1887-1971)**- is arguably one of the most prominent luminaries from Saran, dabbling as a poet, playwright, lyricist, actor, folk dancer, folk singer, social activist, and considered to be the greatest writer from Bhojpur. His skill accorded him the reputation of ‘Shakespeare of Bhojpuri’ and ‘Rai Bahadur’. Throughout his life, he wrote as many as 29 books, including popular plays like *Bidesiya*, *Beti-Viyog*, *Vidhva-Vilap*, *Ganga-Snan*, *Gabarghichor* and *Kaliyug- Prem*, and composed songs and kirtans like *Shiv-Vivah*, *Ramlila-Gaan*, *Budhshalake Beyan*, and *Shanka Samadhan*.



Many of his plays were of a composite nature, imbibing the stylings and traditions of various forms of theatre, both indigenous and international. Like Shakespearean theatre, men performed the role of women as well in his plays, which led to earlier critics describing this form derisively as “laundanaach”. What is interesting about Thakur’s plays is that they relate to both pre-Independence, colonial Raj themes, as well as post-Independence, Nehruvian themes. His focus on folk elements, however, is something that has remained constant.

One of his lasting legacies was establishing an oft repeated style in films, called Bidesiya (focusing on the lives of ordinary people in folk culture), a concept based on the name of his most significant play. This style uses elements from folk tradition and theatre, like nautanki and tamasha.

**Chitragupt Shrivastva (1917-1991)**- Chitragupt was one of the most prolific music



composers in Bollywood. He did his master’s in economics and went on to do an MA in Journalism, before he and his friend Madan Sinha (well-known cinematographer who directed *Imtihaan* starring Vinod Khanna in 1974) went to Mumbai to try their luck in the film industry. He started off with small roles as a chorus singer in Nitin Bose’s film, and soon became the assistant of Shri Nath Tripathi, a legendary music composer. Under Tripathi’s tutelage, Chitragupt learned the ropes of the industry and was able to eventually branch out as an independent music director.

His big break was composing the score for the film *Fighting Hero* (1946), and due to his association with Tripathi he managed to snag the role as music composer for a number of B-list Bollywood films. No matter the genre, Chitragupt composed hit after hit in each successive film. His first major success was the Rafi-Shamsad Begum duet *Ada Se Jhoomte Huye* in Nanabhai Bhatt’s *Sinbad the Sailor* (1952). This was followed by the score *O Naag Kahin Jaa Basiyo Re* in the film *Naag Panchami* (1953), sung by Asha Bhosle. It is believed that some of his best work can be located within the most obscure films.

Chitragupt's first feature film involvement was *Shiv Bhakta* (1955), produced by A. V. Meiyappan, the founder of the Madras-based AVM Productions for who he would compose many scores in their various films. It was with that film that he managed to get Lata Mangeshkar to sing his compositions. According to Raju Bharatan, during their long association with each other, Lata Mangeshkar sang around 240 songs, 151 of which were solos.

While most of his colleagues could not keep up with the changing tastes in the 1960s and 1970s, Chitragupt managed to survive by composing some breath-taking scores in films like *Oonche Log*, *Akash Deep*, *Aulaad* and *Vaasana*. By the 1980s he began to branch out and composed scores for Bhojpuri films like *Balam Pardesiya* (1979) as well as a few low-budget Hindi films. The last film for which he composed songs was *Insaaf Ki Manzil* (1988).



**Anand-Milind**-A musical duo, Anand and Milind Shrivastva are the sons of Chitragupt who followed in their father's footsteps. Chitragupt claimed that his sons had already surpassed him when they won the Filmfare Award for Best Music Director in 1988 for their songs in the film *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*. Other films they have worked on include- *Dil*, *Beta*, *Bol Radha Bol*, and *Anaari*, among others. However, they have not had a stellar career like their father's and have admitted to copying certain tunes from singers like Ilaiyaraaja.



**LachhimiSakhi-Pandey Kapil** (1930-2017)-One of the most prominent Bhojpuri novelists of his time, Pandey Kapil was also the editor of a major Bhojpuri magazine, Bhojpuri Sammelan Patrika and he also established the first All India Association of Bhojpuri Writers (Akhil Bharatiya Bhojpuri Sahitya Sammelan). Kapil also established his own publication house, Bhojpuri Sansthan, in 1970 as a means of promoting up and coming Bhojpuri writers since they possessed very little resources to make their mark in the literary world. His most prominent work is *Phoolsungi* (1977), which was a risky move on his part as the novel's main theme was about reconciliation and he was an employee in Rajyabhasha Vibhag of the Government of Bihar during the Emergency period. This book was translated into English and republished by Gautam Choubey in 2020. Other works by him include *Arrah Me Do Maas* (translated edition of *Two Months in Arrah* by J. Halls), *Kahn a Sakli*, *Parinami Udan Par*, *Kinch Bechari Ka Kahi*, and *Bhor Ho Gail*. An interesting fact about Kapil is that he initially began his career with Hindi stories but made the switch to Bhojpuri because he was enamoured by the dialect.

**Ramchandra Manjhi** (b. 1925)-Recipient of the 2017 Sangeet NatakAkademi Award and the 2021 Lok Theatre and Padma Shri Award, Ramchandra Manjhi is one of the most prolific artists to ever grace the stages of traditional Indian theatre. Born in Chapra, he is the sole surviving artist from the troupe organized by Bhikhari Thakur. A versatile actor, he is best known as a Launda Naach actor. This form of theatre involves comedy, satire, musical and dance numbers, and its distinctive characteristic is that men impersonate women characters in a performance which goes on till the night. The history of this performance is generally traced through oral sources back to the 11th century, and today it can be seen performed mainly in Bhojpuri circuits during celebrations like Chhath Puja.



For more than 86 years, at the age of 96, he continues to apply his own makeup and dons his own costume before each performance. He has mastered the art of getting into character from the tender age of 10. Interestingly he and his troupe dislike being called Launda Naach, as the word Launda is a derogatory term which was earlier used to make fun of performers like him. Instead, they simply refer to this form of theatre as Naach.

After Bhikari Thakur passed away in 1971, Manjhi continued to promote the indigenous and traditional forms of theatre from Bihar. Some of his most well-known plays include *Gabarghichor*, *Beti Bechawa*, *GungaSnan*, *Krishna Leela*, *VidhawaVilaap*, *Nanad- Bhaujai*, *Putr-Vadh*, *Bhai-Virodh*, and *Piya- Nisaeel*.

**Dharni Das** (1646-1688)-A Ramanandi saint and Bhojpuri poet from Chapra, he is credited with raising the standard of Bhojpuri literature. He was born as Gaibi into a Kayastha family and was a contemporary of Aurangzeb. His followers are generally referred to as Dharnidasis- they wear a beaded string around the neck, chant his bhajans, and abstain from eating meat.

There is a popular myth regarding how he ascended to sainthood. One day, as he was working, he poured a pot of water on some sacred scriptures belonging to his landlord. When his landlord demanded to know why he had damaged his texts, Dharni Das responded that he could see that the god Jagannath was being burned alive and so he poured water on the texts to save him. His landlord discovered that he wasn't lying, and so he was elevated to the status of a saint.

In 1657 he joined a group of Vaishnava scholars who believed in the Ramananda school of thought. His initiation ceremony was performed by Charandas, and he became a disciple of Vinodanand. Two incidents spurred him to join ascetism- the death of his father and the death of Shah Jahan. As he was elevated in the ranks of the group, he amassed his own following. Two of his most prominent disciples were Sadanand and Karunanidhan.

Over time he established several Mathas (monasteries). For instance, Paras Matha near Ekma, Sahnam Matha near Bhatni (a fair is organized here annually to remember him and his followers), and a Matha near Manjhi, where he was born. He was against the practices of idolatry and mocked superstitious people. Dharni Das also authored three significant works- *Prem Prakash/Pragas* (made widely available in 1887, printed by the Nashik Press in Chapra), *Shabd Prakash* and *Aalif* (only book of his written in Persian, instead of Bhojpuri). A collection of his various compositions was published in 1911 as a 47-page booklet, called *Dharnidas ki vani*, by a publisher in Allahabad.



**Dr. Narendra Kumar Pandey** (b. 1951)-A recipient of the 2005 Dr. B. Roy National award and the 2014 Padma Shri award, Narendra Kumar Pandey is a prominent surgeon, hospital administrator, and the founder of the Asian Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS). Dr. Pandey received his MBBS from Patna University in 1974, and then went on to become a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (FRCS Edin) in 1982, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow (FRCS Glasgow) in 2005, International College of Surgeons (FICS) and the American

College of Surgeons (FACS). He specializes in general surgery and laparoscopic surgery.

Dr. Pandey is an extremely accomplished person in his field, and his other accolades and positions include- Chairman, Managing Director and Head of Department of Surgery at Asian Institute of Medical Sciences, Faridabad; President and Associate of Surgeons of India in 2010; Examiner for the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, both for MRCS and FRCS; Consultant to National Board of Examinations; Senior Specialist Surgeon at Tata Central Hospital; and Surgical Registrar at both District General Hospital, Aberyswyth and North Devon District Hospital, UK.

# Folktales of Saran

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**Gajendra Moksha**- A popular Vaishnava tale with 33 shlokas, whose events are believed to have taken place in Saran thousands of years ago. The story is narrated by Shukadeva, Sage Vyasa's son, who begins with a description of the Trikuta Mountain, a huge range with an altitude of around 80,000 miles, located in the Ocean of Milk (other variations claim that it wasn't an Ocean of Milk but the confluence of the Ganga and Sonebhadra rivers). Trikuta had three prominent peaks made of iron, silver and gold, which shone continuously throughout the day. Located in the valley of the mountain was a beautiful forest called Rtumat, constructed by the God Varuna, within which there was a magical pond which was said to possess healing properties akin to somarasa or ambrosia. Gajendra, the mighty elephant king, was said to bathe in this pond everyday with his queens. His massive size and power guaranteed him peace as no other beast would dare disturb him during his bath.

However, one day as Gajendra bathed himself, he found his foot caught in the jaws of Grah, the crocodile king. Gajendra struggled to free himself, but Grah's grip was too strong for him to pull through. With no other option left, he prayed to Hari (Vishnu) to rescue him from this fate. As Gajendra saw Hari approach, he lifted a lotus using his trunk and spoke, "O Lord Narayan, adored by all, I bow to Thee!" When Hari saw the pain Gajendra was in, he dismounted Garuda and approached the pond. He then lifted Gajendra along with Grah and tore the latter's jaws apart to release the former from his grip. The prayer Gajendra chants is referred to as *Gajendra Moksha*, and it is believed that if one regularly chants this prayer they will be redeemed from the direst struggles of their life.

Gajendra Moksha prayer (as translated by B. K. Chaturvedi):

*Om name Bhagvatetamseyatetatchhidatmakam*

*Purushyadibeejayapareshayabhideemahi ||*

He, with whose spirit this lifeless body and mind gets energized with consciousness; who is represented by Om and who permeates all Nature and Beings- We revere that great God in our mind

*YasminnidamYatashchedamYenedamYaidamswayam |*

*Yoasmatparasmacchaparatamparpadyeswayam-bhuwam ||*

He who creates and sustains this world and who is also manifest only through this world- I seek shelter in such Lord, self-created and beyond the scope of cause and effect.

*Yah swatmanaedamnijmayayapitam*

*Kwachidvibhatam Kwa cha tattirohitam |*

*Aviddhaksakshyubhyamtadeekshate*

*Sa atmamooloavatu mam paratparah ||*

He, who sees the apparent world- as defined by the scriptures, though created by his wish and who is visible in the time of existence and invisible in the period of dissolution, by his all-pervading sight- and hence aloof from it- may He, the light of our vision, protect me.

*Kalen panchatvamiteshukritsnasho*

*Lokeshupaleshu cha sarvahetshu |*

*Tamastadasseedgahanamgabheeram*

*Yastasyapareabhivirajatevibhuh ||*

Owing to the effect of time, all realms and all the guardians of the quarters like Brahma and others got dissolved in nature and only impregnable dark nature existed. But, beyond even that darkness, whoever remains lighted in his Supreme Realm, who is omniscient and ever radiant- may that Lord protect me.

*Na Yasya deva rishyapadamvidu-  
rjantuhpunahkaohartigantumeertum |  
Yathanatasyakritibhivircheshtato  
Duratyayanukramanahsamavatu ||*

Like an actor performing various roles, is not recognized in reality by an ordinary viewer, the same way even the noble Gods and sages fail to realize His real form, let alone the ordinary mortal. May God of such incomprehensible form come to protect me.

*Didrikshavoyasyapadamsumangalam  
Vimuktasangamunyahsusadhavah |  
Charantyalokvritamvranam vane  
Bhootatmabhootahsuhridah same gatik ||*

He, who is ever in total empathy with all the beings, free from mortal attractions, who is the well-wisher of all and in the quest of getting whose vision before their eyes, the nobles sages and saints perform great austerities while staying in jungles- may that God be my ultimate goal.

*Na vidyateyasya cha janma karma va  
Na namroopegunadoshevava |*

*Tathapilokapsyyasambhavaya yah*

*Swabhayayatanyanukalmrichchhati ||*

He, who is neither born like we mortals owing to the destined deeds remaining undone, nor whose action has any arrogance of the doership, nor whose attributeless form has any name or entity but who creates and dissolves the whole world out of a will in conformity with his self-created norms.

*Tasmeinamahpareshayabrahmane Ananta shaktaye |*

*Aroopayouroopayanamashcharyakarmane ||*

To Him, the All-Powerful Supreme Lord, I bow in reverence to him, formless yet with a myriad of shapes, the performer of amazing deeds- I repeatedly bow in reverence.

*Nam atmadeepayasakshineparmatmane |*

*Namo giramvidoorayamansshchetasampati ||*

I bow to that Self-Lighted and Omnipresent Supreme. My repeated obeisance to that Lord, who is beyond the reach of mind, voice, and attributes.

*Sattvenpratilabhyayanaishkaryenavipashchita |*

*Namah kaivalya nathayanirvanasukhasancide ||*



My obeisance to Lord, who grants final release to men earning the right by their noble behaviour and who is the bliss of emancipation Himself.

*Namahshantayaghoryamoodhayagunadharmine |*

*Nirvisheshayasamyayanamogyanghanaya cha ||*

My obeisance to Him, who appears quiet to those having the attributes, terrible to those having passionate attributes and impregnable to those having dull attributes. He is Immutable and the Beacon of All Knowledge.

*Kshetragyayanamastubhyamsarvadhuyakshayasakshine*

*purushayatmamoolayamoolaprakritayenamah ||*

O Lord and creator of all bodily organs and senses, and the very witness to their functioning- my obeisance to you! You, Lord, are Omniscient, the primal cause of nature but still beyond it- my reverence to you?

*Sarvendruiyagunadrashtre-sarvapatyayahetve*

*Asatachchhayayaktayasadabhasayatenamah ||*

O! Master of all senses, the cause of all attractions! O! One present in all the world whether living or dead and appearing through all knowledge and ignorance (i.e., He is All in All)- my obeisance to You!

*Namo namastekhilakaranaya*

*Nishkarnayadbhutakaranaya |*

*Sarvagmamnayamaharnavaya*

*Namoapavargayaparayanaya ||*

You are the sole cause of everything but despite being the Cause, you are beyond Effect and hence unique- my repeated obeisance to you. O! The ultimate meaning of all the Vedas and Scriptures, the destination of the salvation seeking noble men, the Lord Supreme- I bow to Thee!

*Gunaranichchhannachidooshmapaya*

*Tatkshobhavisphoorjitamansaya |*

*Naishakarmyabhavenvivarjitagam*

*Swayam prakshayanamaskaromi ||*

He, who is hidden in all the three basic attributes of the creation like fire in the wood- it is an agitation in the attributes, that surfaces a desire of creation, who is ever radiant with the knowledge realized through austerities by nobles and saints- I bow to such a Great Lord.

*Madrikprapannapashupashavimokshnaya*

*Muktayabhoorikarunayanamoalayaya |*

*Swanshenasarvatanubhrinmanasiprateeta*

*Pratyagdrishebhagwatevrihate namaste ||*

My obeisance to the Supreme Kind, ever-liberated Lord, who could rid me, an animal, of the noose of ignorance and who is ever slow in shedding His mercy! Ever present through His spirit in the hearts of all beings, the ruler of All, the Lord Infinite- I bow to Thee!

*Atmatmajaptagrihavittajaneshusakte  
rdushprapanayagunasangavivarjhitaya |  
mutaumabhihswahridayparibhavitaya  
gyanatmnebhagwatenamahIshwaraya ||*

He, who is difficult to be realized by those infatuated with their bodies, friends, riches, and family bonds and who is ever dwelling in the hearts of the liberated men, the Beacon of All Knowledge and Omnipotent God- I bow to Thee!

*Yam dharmakamarthavimuktikama  
Bhajantishtamgatimapnuvanti |  
Kim twareeshoratyakidehamavyayam  
KarotumeadabhradayoVimokshanam ||*

He, who is approachable by those following their Dharma and who fulfils all their desires, including that of the final release, He also grants them unasked boons and the imperishable body of His own attendant- that Supreme and kind God may redeem me forever from this trouble.

*Ekantinoyasyanakanchanarthey  
vanchanti ye veibhagavatprapannah*

*atyabhutamtachcharitamsumangalam*

*Gayantaanandasamudramagnah ||*

His loyal devotees, seeking shelter in His grace only, never desire for any material or spiritual benefit but only chant His auspicious glory of unique doings and thus remain ever immersed in the ocean of blessings.

*TamaksharamBrahm param paresh*

*Mavyaktamadhyamikayogagamyam |*

*Ateendriyamsookshmamivatidor*

*Manamtmadyamparipoornameede ||*

I bow to that Imperishable, Omnipresent, the Best, Ruler of all Gods including Brahma; Unmanifest for atheists but Manifests through deep devotion; despite being close yet appearing very far owing to the veil of Illusion; unrealizable through senses, incomprehensible, Endless, yet the cause of every beginning, and perfect in every way.

*YasyaBrahmadayo deva Veda lokshcharcharah |*

*Namroopavibhedenaphalgvya cha kalyakritah ||*

With whose tiny fraction are created all Gods, including Brahma, the Four Vedas, the animate and inanimate world in a myriad of forms.

The rays of the burning fire and the shining sun repeatedly originating from their source and eventually again getting coalesced along with their wisdom and intellect get created by the Self-Radiant God, and get coalesced with that Source only.

*Sa vein a devasurmartyatiryan*

*Na streenashandonapumannajantuh |*

*Nayamgunah karma nasannachasan*

*Nishedhasheshojayatadasheshah ||*

That Lord is neither God, nor demon, nor man, nor of any sub-human species. Neither is He female, nor male, nor eunuch. Neither is He an attribute, nor an action, nor a cause. He is what remains after negating everything. He is that All in All. May that Lord incarnate Himself for redeeming me from this trouble.

*Jijeevishenahamihamuya ki*

*Mantarvahishchavritayebayonya |*

*Ichchhamikalennayasyaviplava*

*StasyatmalokaVaranasyamoksham ||*

I don't want to survive even after getting released from this crocodile's clutches, because my pachydermatous body is covered with ignorance inside and out. I crave only redemption from that ignorance which covers my soul, and which does not get destroyed by the effect of time but only either by the Divine Grace or by the in-born Enlightenment.

*Soahamvishwarijamvishwamvishwamvishwavedasam |*

*ViswatmanamajamBrahmpranatoasmi param padam ||*

Thus, I crave shelter in, and give my obeisance to, that Exalter Supreme God who creates the world and through his creation is Manifest Himself; all pervading, yet aloof from it, playing with his Creation; Omnipresent and the best, that once could ever yearn for.

*Yogarandhitakarmanohridiyogavibhavite |*

*Yogino Yam prapashyantiyogesham tam natoasmyaham ||*

I bow to Him, the Lord, who is visualized by those who have burnt their deeds in the fire of their unswearing devotion to Almighty. To that Almighty, I give my obeisance.

*Namo namastubhyamasahyavega*

*Shaktitraayakhiladheegunaya |*

*Prapannapatayadurantashaktaye*

*Kadinariyyanamanvapyavatarmane ||*

Whose powers delineating the three basic attributes (the noble, the passionate and the dull) have a tremendous speed to cope with, who appear as though He is the object satisfying all the sensual delights. But to those sensual cravers, He is not accessible at all. My repeated obeisance to that protector of the shelter-seekers, the Immensely Powerful Lord (you)!

*Namay Veda swamatmanamyakchaktyahmdhirahatam |*

*Tam duratyayamahatmayamBhagwantitoasmyaham //*

He, whose illusive ignorance envelops the sense of the being, by the vain arrogance of the doership and prevents it from realizing the Reality- I seek shelter in that God of Infinite Grace.



# Languages and Dialects

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According to the Census of 2011, the mother tongue spoken by the population of Saran is as follows:

Assamese- 7 people

Bengali- 306 people

Gujarati- 11 people

Pattani/Manchad/Lahauli- 1 person. A Tibeto-Burman language belonging to the western subgroup, which has a limited textual tradition. Pattani has a three-way contrast in number, that is, singular, dual, and plural. Gender is not grammatical, rather, it is lexically based. Those who speak this language generally follow a dual mix of Hinduism and Buddhism, and the impact of such a hybridised religion can be seen in the language.

Although it is classified as a Tibeto-Burman language, Pattani also shares some features of Indo-Aryan, Dravidian and Munda languages. It can even be traced back to the ancient Zhangzhung language of western Tibet (prominent before the Tibetan empire emerged) as Pattani contains the four verb-stems of classical Tibetan languages- present, past, pluperfect, and future tense.

Bhojpuri- 3,681,550 people

Bishnoi- 148 people

Dhundhari- 16 people. An Indo-Aryan language belonging to the Rajasthani branch, spoken primarily in the Dhundhar region of Rajasthan. Dhundhari utilizes the Devanagari script in its written form, but its textual tradition is highly limited.

Gawari- 16 people

Hindi- 175,899 people

Magadhi/Magahi- 1568 people. An Indo-European language which shares similar traits with Pali, has been influenced by the Khadi Boli dialect, and is predominantly spoken in Bihar. It is a developed form of Magadhi Prakrit which was spoken in the mahajanapada of Magadha, hence the name “Magadhi/Magahi”. Its etymology has changed over time, early Buddhist texts and even Kaccayana (author of Kaccayana Vyakarana) referred to the language Pali as Magadhi.

Although it originally utilized the Kaithi script, it is now written down using the Devanagari script, although some variants utilize the Bengali and Odia scripts. Despite possessing several different scripts, Magadhi’s textual tradition is highly limited in nature, with most of its stories being preserved in an oral form (for instance, the Birth of Lorik).

Marwari- 121 people. An Indo-Aryan language from the Marwari subgroup of the Rajasthani dialect, which is closely related to Haryanvi, Gujarati, Punjabi, and Hindi. Although initially written in the Mahajani script (a variant of the Landa script), this language now utilizes the Devanagari script, but an interesting fact is that the Marwari language used in Pakistan utilizes the Perso-Arabic script instead.

Rajasthani- 12 people

Sadan/Sadri- 32 people. An Indo-European and Dravidian language which is a branch of Prakrit. Sadri also belongs in the same group as Bengali, Maithili, and Oriya. One of the variants of this language is Nagpuri. Sadri utilizes two scripts, Bengali and Devanagari, and several popular works of literature have been written in this language. Currently, the most well-known magazine written in Sadri is *Gharaiya Guith*, published in Shillong. Apart from texts, numerous songs and poems have also been composed in Sadri, and these compositions began to be broadcasted to regions like Orissa and Jharkhand post-1980.

Surjapuri- 85 people. An Eastern Indo-Aryan language which shares similarity with other languages like Kamatapuri, Assamese, Bengali and Maithili. Some of the speakers of this language refer to it as “DeshiBhasa”.

Maithili- 564 people. An Indo-Aryan language from the Indo-European language family predominantly spoken in the Mithila region. What is interesting about Maithili is that it is the only Bihari language which has its own script- Tirhuta, and a rich textual tradition which is generally attributed to the poet-saint Vidyapati (late 14th and early 15th century).

Malayalam- 4 people

Marathi- 4 people

Nepali- 42 people

Odia/Oriya- 20 people. An Indo-Aryan language which is considered the oldest surviving branch of the eastern group, tracing its origins back to Ardhamagadhi Prakrit. It emerged as a distinct language as far back as the 10th century, but it remained almost indistinguishable from Bengali until the 11th century. The first poem composed in Odia dates to the 15th century, and it widely began to be used in literature post-18th century.

Odia has been influenced by several different languages over time, particularly the Dravidian ones, as well as Arabic, Persian, English, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Turkish, French, Portuguese, and Sanskrit, giving it an especially rich lexicon. Words that have been borrowed from Sanskrit are classified into two sub-groups- tatsama (close to the original form) and tadbhava (remote from the original form).

Punjabi- 20 people

Sanskrit- 5 people

Santali- 69 people. An Austroasiatic language which is a part of Kherwarian branch in the Munda subgroup (specifically North Munda languages). This language utilizes various scripts- Roman, Devangari, Bengali, Oriya and OlCemet/OlChiki (an indigenous script created by Pandit Raghunath Murmu in the 1920s).

Sindhi- 1 person. An Indo-Aryan language which has been officially recognized by the Constitution of India, and can be found spoken not just in India, but in other regions like North America, The United Kingdom, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. Sindhi is closely related to the Siraiki language, as they both share four distinctive implosive consonants- /b/, /d/, /g/, and /j/, which are pronounced with indrawn breath and contrast phonemically with the usual /b/, /d/, /g/, and /j/.

Telegu- 17 people

Urdu- 89,911 people

Afghani- 5 people

Arabic/Arbi- 6 people

English- 77 people

Kurukh/Oraon- 18 people. A Dravidian language belonging to the northern group which has been classified by UNESCO as “vulnerable” in its list of endangered languages. Oraon shares similar traits with Sauria Paharia and Kumarbhag Paharia, often collectively termed as Malto. Oraon generally utilizes the Devanagari script, and in 1999 Dr. Narayan Oraon invented the alphabetic Tolong Siki script specifically for this language. This script was officially recognized by the state of Jharkhand in 2007, and the Kurukh Literary Society of India devotes its time and resources to spread the use of this script in texts written in Oraon.

Munda- 16 people. An Austroasiatic language which is generally classified into two subgroups- North Munda (spoken in Chota Nagpur Plateau of Bihar, Bengal, and Orissa) which includes Korcu, Santhali, Mundari, Bhumji and Ho; and South Munda (spoken in Central Orissa and on the border of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa). The latter is further subdivided into- Central Munda, which includes Kharia and Juang; and Koraput Munda, which includes Gutob, Remo, Sora (Savara), Juray and Gorum. The North Munda languages are the most prevalent ones in this group.

Mundari- 1 person. An Austroasiatic language which is a part of North Munda subgroup. Mundari utilizes a different script based on the region where it is used. These scripts include- Bengali, Devanagari, Odia, Mundari Bani, and even Latin. Mundari Bani is a script which has come into use quite recently, created by Pandit Rohidas Singh Nag (1934-2012), a Mundari linguist from the Mayurbhanj region of Odisha, in the mid-20th century. Mundari is also subdivided based on its different dialects, which includes- Hasada, Naguri, Tamaria, and Kera.

Other languages- 1316 people

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