

# National Mission for Clean Ganga

(Reg. Society)

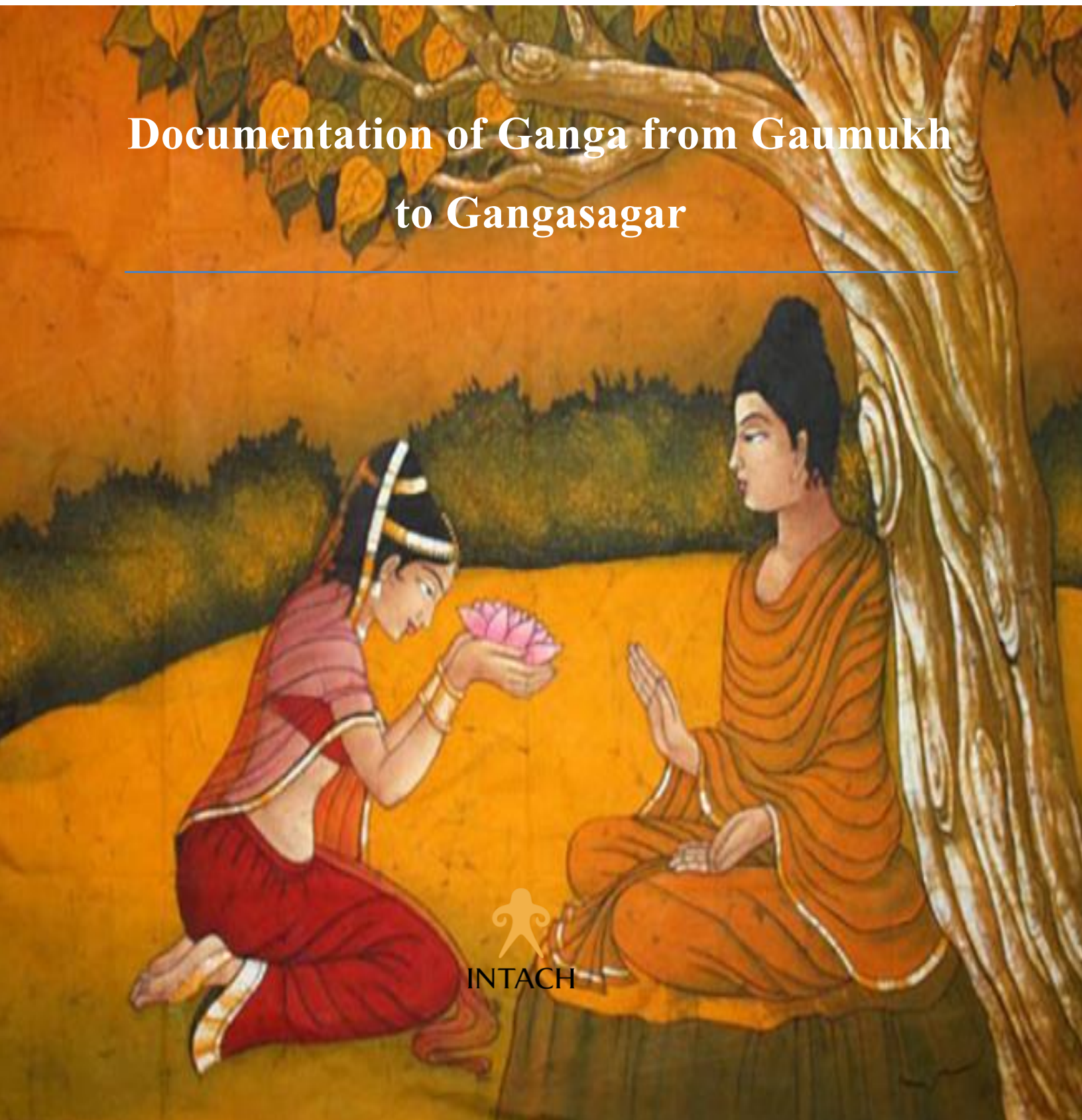
Ministry of Jal Shakti

Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation  
Government of India



## Documentation of Ganga from Gaumukh to Gangasagar

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Vaishali 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  
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**INTACH** Indian  
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# Contents

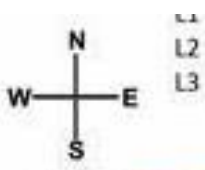
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History of Vaishali.....	01
Sacred Complexes.....	15
Folktales of Vaishali.....	25
Fairs and Festivals.....	34
Luminaries from Vaishali.....	36
Languages and Dialects.....	41
Hindi Tithi Calendar.....	45
Bibliography.....	56
Research Team.....	60

*Cover Image: Scene of Ambapali with Lord Buddha; Amrapali was a celebrated nagarvadhu (royal courtesan) of the republic of Vaishali in ancient India around 500 BC. Following the Buddha's teachings, she became an arahant.*

*Back Cover: Copy of the seal excavated from Kundpur, Vaishali. The Brahmi letters on the seal mean Kundpur was in Vaishali.*

DISTRIST MAP  
VAISHALI





# History of Vaishali

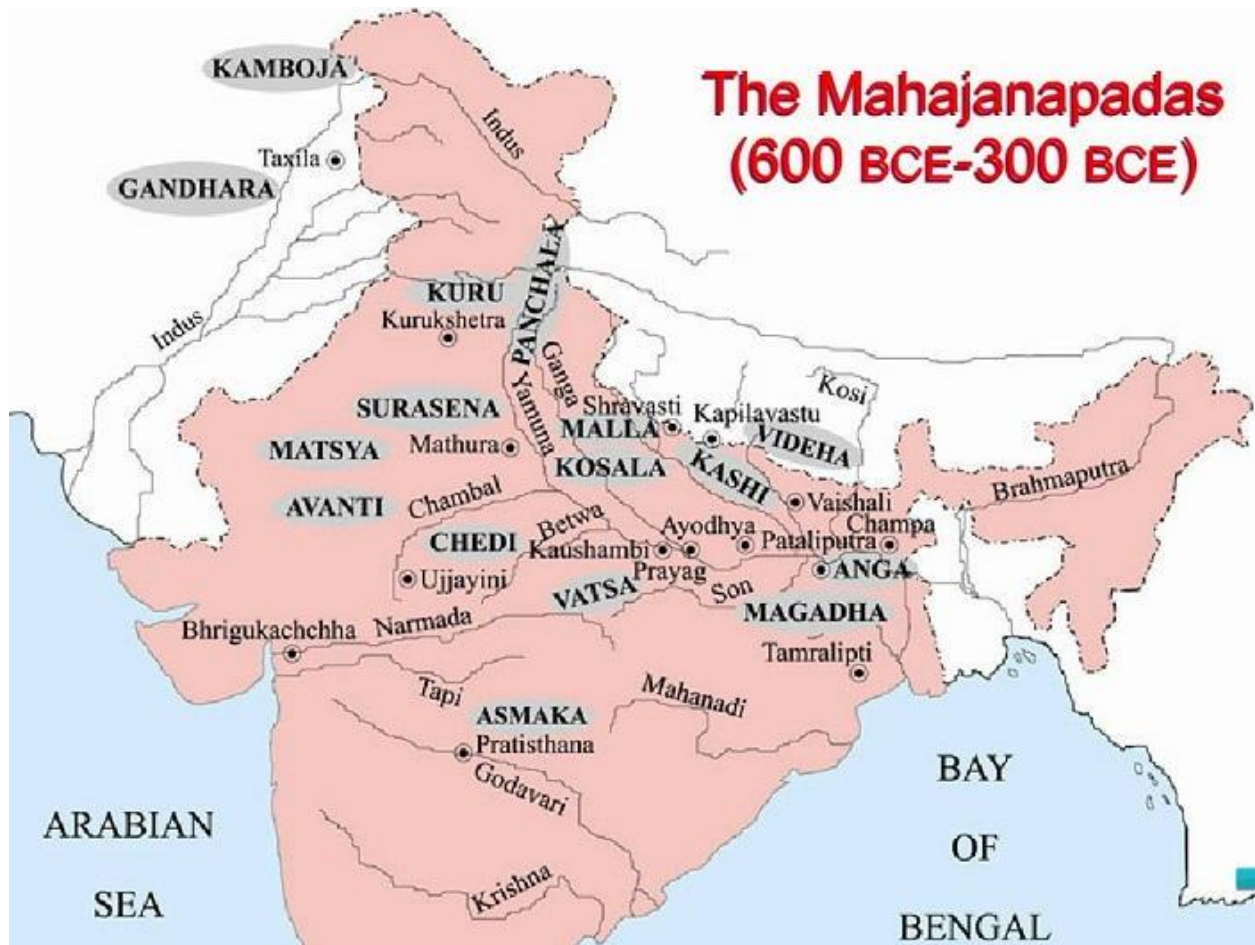


Figure 1 Mahajanapadas in ancient India

Vaishali, and its eastern neighbour Videha, were the two dominant states in the region now known as North Bihar during the Ancient Historical period. The boundary between Videha and Vaishali was often quite flexible, and the two share certain historical events. For instance, being the birthplace of Mahavira,

Videhadatta and Vedehi/Vaidehi (who were the sister and daughter of Chetaka, the ruler of the Lichchhavi clan in Vaishali, and Mahavira and Ajatashatru's mother respectively).

The earliest mention of these regions is in the Shatapatha-Brahmana's account of Videgha Mathava. From this account, we find out that the region was uncultivated, marshy, not considered sacral as it had yet to be sanctified by the Brahmins, generally a cold region because of the constant flow of the river Gandak. Such inhospitable conditions made it extremely tough for the first dynasties to establish their rule and build up the region as one of the dominant powerhouses in the country.





Figure 2 Idol of Buddha



Figure 3 Seniya Bimbisara

There are many theories regarding the etymology of the name Vaishali. Some believe it is based on the term vishala, which literally means “very large and wide area”. Others refer to the Mahabharata’s mention of a river near the region called Vishala. Another theory is that it is because much of the population in Vaishali at this time belonged to the merchant or Vaishya class. The suffix of Vaishali might have also been derived from the Sal trees which in the adjoining forests, or perhaps a variation of the Gandaka river’s name (Shalagrami). The most widely accepted theory is that Vaishali’s name was derived from one of its earliest rulers- a man called Vishala, and his dynasty is generally referred to as the Vaishalaka dynasty.

According to various sources, this is the (incomplete) genealogy of native kings of Vaishali:

1. Nabhanedishtha (2nd generation)
2. Nabhaga
3. Bhalandana (6th generation)
4. Vatsa-pri (8th generation)
5. Pramshu (12th generation)
6. Prajani/Prasandhi (16th generation)
7. Khanitra (20th generation)
8. Kshupa (24th generation)
9. Ikshvaku (Possibility)
10. Vimsha (28th generation)
11. Vivimsha (32nd generation)
12. Rambha

13. Khaninetra (35th generation)
14. Ativibhuti/Vibhuti
15. Karandharma (38th generation)
16. Avikshita (39th generation)
17. Marutta (40th generation)
18. Narishyanta (41st generation)
19. Dama (42nd generation)
20. Rajyavardhana (44th generation)
21. Suvridhi
22. Kevala
23. Sudhriti (45th generation)
24. Nara (46th generation)
25. Chandra
26. Kevala (47th generation)
27. Bandhumat (48th generation)
28. Vegavat (49th generation)
29. Budha (50th generation)
30. Trinabindu (52nd generation)
31. Vishravas (53rd generation)
32. Vishala (54th generation)
33. Hemachandra (55th generation)
34. Suchandra (56th generation)

35. Dhumrashva (57th generation)
36. Shrinjaya (58th generation)
37. Sahadeva (59th generation)
38. Krishashva (60th generation)
39. Somadatta (62nd generation)
40. Janamejaya/Kakutstha (63rd generation)
41. Sumati (64th generation)

After Sumati, there is a gap of almost 6 centuries regarding what happened in Vaishali. Scholars generally refer to this period as the 'Dark Age of Vaishalian History'. Various theories have been proposed as to what may have happened- D. S. Triveda believes that during this period Vaishali may have become a part of the kingdom of Mithila; S. C. Sarkar believes that after one Vaishalian king, Pramati, the kingdom became a part of Kosala, and when Kosala began to decline then it became a part of Mithila; V. Rangacharya posits that post-Sumati's reign, Vaishali either became a part of Videha or remained independent, albeit in a politically turbulent time.



Figure 4 Kutagarashala Vihara

Yogendra Mishra cites that it is more likely that Rangacharya's theory was correct, and the reason why many sources do not include Vaishali in the list of state republics is because the region might have been divided up amongst several indigenous tribes and clans, which chroniclers might not have been keen to include in a list focused on documenting the reigns of who they considered to be important rulers.





Figure 5 Kumaradevi and Chandragupta I engraved on a coin





*Painted specially for this work.]*

#### PRASENAJIT OF KOSALA (OUDH) PAYS A VISIT, 520 B.C.

The scene of Buddha's labours as a preacher was largely laid in Magadha (Southern Bihar), between which and Kosala there was a bitter family feud, in which Prasenajit, King of Kosala, was eventually worsted. One of Buddha's early triumphs was the winning over of Prasenajit, who paid him a ceremonial visit that has become famous in Buddhist story.

Figure 6 Prasenajit of Kosala's visit to the region



Figure 7 Relic Stupa

During the period of the Vajjian Republic (c. 725-484 BCE), the Lichchhavis were one of the most important and influential members of this group. We know this mainly through Buddhist texts and sources. The rulers of this clan were considered on par with the rulers of Mahajanpadas like Seniya Bimbisara of Magadha and Prasenajit of Kosala. They were in constant conflict with these Mahajanapadas, and were eventually defeated by Bimbisara's successor, Ajatashatru (c. 492-461 BCE). Details of this bloody battle are given in two sources- the Nirayavaliya and the Bhagavati-Sutra.

It is interesting to note that according to extensive surveys conducted by Alexander Cunningham, the village of Basarh in the Muzaffarpur district of Bihar is believed to be the original site for the location of Vaishali during the early historical period. Cunningham's identification would later be proven right when archaeological surveys were carried out in the region in 1903-1904 by T. Bloch, in 1913-1914 by D. B. Spooner, in 1950 by K. Deva, and finally in 1958-1959 by A. S. Altekar.

A somewhat accurate description of what the site must have been like in its heyday- the Jatakas state that there was a triple wall which encompassed the entire city, and each wall was situated at about a league's (gavuta) distance from the next; the Mahavagga (a Buddhist text) describes the city as an opulent, prosperous region, crowded with people from various walks of life; it goes on further to state that there were around 7707 storeyed buildings, 7707 pinnacled buildings, 7707 pleasure grounds (aramas) and 7707 lotus-ponds (the figures might have been exaggerated, but the repeated emphasis on the number 7707 is an interesting detail, as it originally refers to the number of foundation families who earlier constituted the ruling class in Vaishali); The Dulva (a Tibetan text) elaborates more on the layout, stating that there were three districts within Vaishali- in the first there were 7000 houses with golden towers occupied by the elite classes, in the second 14000 with silver towers occupied by the middle classes, and in the third 21000 with copper towers occupied by the lower classes; these districts, according to Rudolf Hoernlé (translated the Uvasagadasao), might have been called Veshali proper (south-eastern area), Kundapura (north-eastern area) and Vaniyagama (western area); beyond Kundapura was a suburb (Sannivesa) referred to as Kollaga, principally occupied by the Kshatriya community from the Naya/Jnatri clan (Mahavira belonged to this clan); Hieun Tsang in his travels describes Vaishali's foundations as being about 60-70 li in length (30-35 km), the royal quarters (which includes the area of the city walled off from the rest and reserved exclusively for the royal family and their relations) measuring around 4-5 li (2-2.5 km), and the circumference of the entire city was around 12 miles long.

More concrete details of what the site used to be like has been surmised from the survey of nearby sites and villages like Basarh, Chakramdas and Kamman Chhapra in the Lalganj thana of the Hajipur subdivision, and Bania, Kolhua and Basukund in the Paroo thana of the Muzaffarpur subdivision.

Another reason why Vaishali has such religious significance is because it was frequently visited by Gautama Buddha, and it is also the site where the Buddhist Order of Nuns was first established, during the fifth year of the Buddha's ministry. This order was established by Buddha's foster mother Mahapajati

Gotami, on whose behalf Ananda (Buddha's most loyal aide) intervened and received permission to allow women to practice Buddhism and join the sect. This momentous decision in the history of Buddhism is believed to have taken place inside the Kutagara Hall in the Mahavana forest of Vaishali.

After the Buddha's death, the Lichchavis were among the people who received part of Buddha's ashes. Initially, the ashes were contained safely within a cairn, and after a number of years a stupa was erected by a king of Vaishali over the very spot in the first quarter of the 5th century BCE. When Ashoka came to power, he had the stupa opened and removed 9/10th of the relics to distribute them evenly across the Maurya empire in newly established stupas. There is a story that another king wished to open the stupa to acquire the last relic, but just as he was about to do so there was a mighty earthquake which the king and his followers took as a sign of God, that the monument was never again to be disturbed. In March 1958, Altekar and his team excavated a flat, low stupa which he identified as the original stupa built by the king of Vaishali.

From the Gupta period onwards, Videha and Vaishali became a part of the Gupta empire and were collectively referred to as Tirabhukti (or Tairabhukti according to some texts). We know this due to the fact that this name is engraved on some Basarh seals listing Tirabhukti as one of the Gupta provinces, and the text Brihad-Vishnupurana describes the geography of this region in depth, and it matches the geography of Videha-Vaishali. Other sources which mention Tirabhukti include- Linganusahasana, Trikandashesha, Vividhatirthakalpa, Shaktisangamatantra, and Bhringaduta

Vaishali continued to remain a prosperous region during this period, and this is corroborated by various sources and events. For instance, Kumaradevi, a Lichchavi princess, was a wife of Chandragupta I, the first Gupta emperor; Samudragupta was related to the Lichchavi as evidenced by his frequent use of the term 'Lichchavi-dauhitra'; the accounts of Fa-hien also back up numerous claims like this. Archaeological excavations conducted in Vaishali in 1903-1904, 1913-1914, February 1950 and January 1958 helped deliver physical evidence that during the Gupta period, Vaishali was a vibrant cultural centre for arts, crafts, trade and education.

Problems started to emerge in this region post-600 CE, till its eventual decline in 1400 CE. During Hieun Tsang's travels in Vaishali, he wrote, "the capital city of Vaishali is to a great extent in ruins... there are several hundred sangharamas, which are mostly dilapidated... the followers of the Nigranthas (Jainism) are very numerous." This is the last written proof scholars have uncovered of the existence of a sizeable Jain population in Vaishali. It is assumed that the main city had been destroyed in the process of a huge



raid sometime in the 6th century CE, which led to its eventual desertion in c. 600 CE, as people migrated to other regions like Nepal, Burma, and perhaps Tibet and Ladakh.

During the Pala period (c. 750-1200) there were a number of images made in remembrance of Jain Tirthankaras, and several Jain writers like Jinasen (8th Vikrama century) and Gunabhadra (9th Vikrama century) wrote that Kundapura (Mahavira's birthplace) was situated in the Vaishali-Videha region. The territory of the Pala kings extended over the Tirhut region as well.

Ghiyas-ud-din Iwaz (Governor of Bengal from 1211-1226) was the first Islamic invader of Tirhut who managed to completely subdue the region. Despite his initial success, he could not assert complete dominance over the entire region of North Bihar. This would finally occur by 1323, under the reign of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, who saw the value in acquiring Hajipur as a territory of Delhi as it was situated directly on the confluence of the Gandak and Ganga rivers, making it a veritable seat of power in the region.

Hajipur had been founded by Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah (founder of the Ilyash Shahi dynasty, and who ruled over Bengal from 1352-1358), where he had built a fortress to celebrate his conquest at Tirhut. For this act of cheek, Feroz Shah Tughlaq marched to Tirhut in 1353 and thoroughly trounced Ilyas Shah's forces.

After this incident, the entire region of North Bihar appears to have been under the reign of the kings of Jaunpur till the end of the 14th century, when they were defeated by Sikander Lodi who promptly took over the whole territory. It must be noted that at this point Vaishali was still considered as part of Tirhut.

Hussain Shah (founder of the Hussain Shahi dynasty, and who ruled over Bengal from 1494-1519) had surrendered important regions like Tirhut and Saran under the terms of the treaty he signed with Sikandar Lodi, who in turn promised not to interfere in the administration of the Bengal Sultanate. The terms of this treaty were violated in the early 16th century by Nasrat Shah, Hussain Shah's son, who invaded Tirhut, killed the king, and appointed his son-in-law Alauddin as the new Governor of Tirhut. He appointed another son-in-law of his, Makhdoom Alam, as the Governor of Hajipur.

However, the power and prestige of the Bengal Sultanate was waning at this point, and it was slowly a matter of time before North Bihar, and with it Vaishali, became part of the territory of the Mughal Empire.

Many local chiefs rebelled against the Mughal establishment, such as Daud Khan (the last Sultan of Bengal, who ruled from 1572-1576), who had established strongholds at Patna and Hajipur. After the rebellion led by Daud Khan was crushed, Hajipur gradually lost its importance as Patna became the new headquarters of the Governor of the Bihar subah, of which Vaishali was a part.

Post-1400, Jainism suffered a significant downfall in Vaishali as more and more people transitioned to Islam. The increasing emphasis on Islam, partly due to the efforts of Sheikh Muhammad Qazin (1434-1495) who preached about Islam in the region, led to the establishment of an Islamic monument- Qazin's mausoleum, which was built on top of a Buddhist stupa. Another factor was the burgeoning sea trade from c. 1498, which led to a number of changes in the course one took on the Gandaka river, making Vaishali feel rather distant from the riverbank, and less appealing to Jain pilgrims.

After the Battle of Buxar (1764), Vaishali became one of many regions over which the British maintained a firm grasp. They were primarily interested in trade in the region and used it along with other districts to supplement their international trading concerns. Sources are rather sparse on what happened beyond this point, as no major incident in question occurred in Vaishali. We know from off-hand reports and sources that citizens from this region took part in the freedom movement as well as the Revolt of 1857.

It is not clear when, but at some point in time Vaishali had become a part of the Muzzafarpur district, and it only emerged as a separate district on October 12th, 1972. Currently Vaishali is divided into three sub-districts- Hajipur (district capital), Mahnar and Majua, and within this district there are 16 different Blocks.



# Sacred Complexes

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Figure 8 Ashokan Lion Pillar

Ashokan Lion Pillar- This pillar is part of a series of stone pillars which Ashoka constructed throughout the subcontinent and is one of the few pillars that is still intact today. The pillar is relatively heavier and less adorned than the others, and a stepped footing was carved out of a single stone slab to effectively dissipate the shaft's load, thus providing a better footing, and stabilizing the surrounding soil.

While it bears no edict issued by Ashoka, it is still the most complete of the lion pillars in the series apart from the Lauriya Nandangarh pillar. The pillar is carved from red sandstone, standing at around 18.3 metres tall with a life-size sculpture of a lion mounted on top facing north (the direction Buddha took on his last voyage). The capital on the pillar is of the usual bell-shaped loti form with plump bulging and is crowned with a sejant lion. The loti form bell's bulge is more pronounced at the bottom compared to the

elegant 'S'-shaped bulge in the other pillars' capital. A single echinus ring is present between the abacus and the bell loti form, engraved with the motif of a rope. One of the bottom two astragals joining the shaft has a bead-and-reel pattern, while the other is of the rope pattern.



**Figure 9** Abhishek Pushkarini

Abhishek Pushkarini-- Otherwise referred to as the 'Coronation Tank', this large body of water situated a few hundred metres from the Relic Stupa (from which Ashoka took the remains of the Buddha's ashes) has a long history associated with Vaishali. It is revered as a sacred body of water, used time and again in the past for the coronation of several Vaishilian kings.



Figure 10 Vishwa Shanti Stupa

Vishwa Shanti Stupa- Otherwise referred to as the 'World Peace Pagoda', this structure was constructed by the Japanese Nichiren Buddhist sect, Nipponzan-Myohoji, right next to the Abhishek Pushkarini. It is believed that this was the sixth stupa to be established in India. A fraction of Buddha's relics has also been enshrined in this structure in the chhatra (umbrella) of the stupa.





**Figure 11 Raja Vishal ka Garh**

Raja Vishal ka Garh- A large mound near the Abhishek Pushkarini which contains a tower encompassed by a canal (43 metres wide) and a stage where the Ancient Parliament of king Vishala used to reside. The stage has an outline of around a kilometre with dividers that are 2 metres high. The stage is large enough to accommodate almost 7000 people at the same time.

Excavations at this site have revealed settlements dating back to 183-173 BCE as well as artefacts which go back to 600 BCE. Among the many items excavated, there were- gold coins, precious jewels, terracotta figurines, utensils, and deer horns. There are also traces of a drainage system as well as artefacts from the Gupta, Kushana and Shunga periods.



**Figure 12 Bawan Pokhar Temple**

Bawan Pokhar Temple- A temple built during the Pala period on the northern banks of the Bawan Pokhar tank, it was dedicated to several gods. The temple has a unique architectural structure as it was inspired by the medieval era architecture of the time, and numerous images of gods and goddesses can be found engraved on the temple walls. Most of the deities are enshrined in one place so that they could be worshipped collectively. The temple also contains a rich collection of images made from black basalt, that can be dated back to the Gupta and Pala period. There is also a large four-headed Shivalinga (Choumukhi Mahadeva) buried within the temple complex, discovered when a reservoir was being dug in the area.

Jain Temple- An unnamed Jain temple located very close to the Bawan Pokhar temple, which houses an important image of Mahavira.

Lotus Tank- A spot frequented by the Lichchhavi nobility for excursions and outings, thus granting it historical significance.

Mahavana- A forest which is said to have stretched till the Himalayas according to Buddhaghosha in his work Sumangalavilasini (commentary to the Mahali-Sutta in the Digha-Nikaya). The name Mahavana literally translates to "Great Forest".

Kutagarashala- Arguably the most famous Buddhist monastery which was established within the Mahavana. According to the Northern books (Divyavadana), this monastery was built on the banks of the Monkey Tank or Monkey Lake (Markatahrada-tire). The building's foundations were laid out north to

south and faced eastwards, and a number of trees had been planted to provide ample shade for the disciples and teachers. Buddhaghosha describes it further, stating that a storeyed-building (pasada) was constructed with several pillars to support the base and a pinnacle was established above. The building as a whole was meant to resemble a chariot of the gods (deva-vimana). Fa-hien's travel accounts corroborate Buddhaghosha's details and add that the pillars held up a gabled room which formed the main part of the Buddha's Gandhakuti. On top of this there was a peak (kuta), which formed two galleries (one below and one above) and the pinnacle was constructed from the upper story, following the similar patterns for constructing a vimana or ratha.

Gilana-Sala- A sick ward attached to the Kutagarashala where Buddha would often visit the patients and philosophize with them, easing their concerns and worries about life.

Markata-Hrada (Monkey Tank)- Identified today with the tank called Ramkund. Hieun Tsang referenced this tank in his travels accounts- "By the side of it (i.e., a stupa built by Ashokaraja) is a stone pillar about 50 or 60 feet high, with the figure of a lion on the top. To the south of the stone pillar is a tank. This was dug by a band of monkeys (Markata-hrada) for Buddha's use. When he was in the world of old, Tathagata (another name for Buddha) once and again dwelt here." He also added that south of the tank there was a stupa where the monkeys would gather honey for Buddha and his followers using their begging bowls, and to the north-west he discovered that there was a sculpture of a monkey, which is no longer present today.

Chaitya- There are 8 Buddhist funerary sites in Vaishali, and they are an important pilgrimage sight revered by many Buddhists. Rhys Davids believes that these chaityas were probably first established as trees or barrows. They are thus named in Buddhist literature:

a. Udena/Udayana- Located in the eastern part of Vaishali. The Dhammapada Commentary classifies this chaitya as rukkha-chatiyani, that is, a shrine people must pay homage to in honour if they want their wishes to be fulfilled. It is said that a vihara was constructed at this site, dedicated to the Yakkha Udena. The etymology of the site might derive from the fact that it was established in the eastern part of Vaishali so that it would continually face the rising sun every morning.

b. Gotamaka- Located in the southern part of Vaishali, this shrine is also classified as rukkha-chatiyani by the Dhammapada Commentary. A vihara had been constructed here as well, and there are references in various Buddhist texts and art that this was a popular site for tree worship. The etymology of this chaitya is not clear, although some believe that it was named after a Yaksha while others claimed it was named



after Gotama Rahugana (a priest involved in the colonisation of the territory east of the Gandak river). A less likely, but still proposed idea, is that the chaitya was named after the Gotama Nagas of the Himalayas.

c. Sattambaka/Sattamba/Saptamraka- Located in the western part of Vaishali, and its etymology comes from the seven daughters of Kiki, the king of Banaras, who left Rajagaha and attained enlightenment at this site. It is also believed that there were seven mango trees at this spot, further adding to the 'sapta' (seven) prefix of the chaitya. This site had a pre-Buddhist heritage and was originally dedicated to some local deity before it became attached to Buddhism.

d. Bahupatta/Bahuputraka- Located in the northern part of Vaishali, and another pre-Buddhist site where there used to be (according to the Commentaries) a many-branched nigrodha tree where devotees prayed to the local deity to bless them with male children (explains the etymology of the term with the use of 'putra', meaning son).

e. Sarandada- Another pre-Buddhist shrine whose location is not exactly clear, but some estimate that it is near the Kutagarashala. The shrine was dedicated to the Yakkha Sarandada and a vihara was constructed to mark it. This site is also famous for being the location where Buddha delivered two famous sermons- the seven things which would ensure the welfare of the Vajjians and prevent them from crumbling into obscurity, and the five treasures in the world.

f. Chapala- A site dedicated to the Yakkha Chapala and where a vihara was erected to mark it as a Buddhist shrine. This site is significant in the history of Buddhism as it is believed that it was here where Buddha, three months before his Mahaparinirvana, accepted the request of the demoness Mara that he must die. The etymology of this site might either have been derived from the term 'Chapala' (literally, "a loose woman", referring to the concubines in the region referenced by pilgrims in their accounts) or from the term 'chapa alaya' (literally, "the bow-place where the bow was deposited").

g. Markatahrada- Named so because it is situated on the banks of the Markata-Hrada.

h. Kapinahya- The exact location of this site as well as its significance is unclear, but Buddhist sources describe it as being one of the prevalent chaityas of Vaishali.

Ambapali-Vana- A grove in Vaishali covered with mango trees, and named after the famous courtesan Ambapali. The grove was given to her as a gift by Buddha and his disciples during their last visit to Vaishali. The exact location of this grove is a matter of debate, as sources vary and contradict each other- Fa-hien states that it is located south of Vaishali, west of the road from Pataliputra, and claims that Ambapali had

constructed a vihara in honour of Buddha; Hieun Tsang, on the other hand, writes that it was located west of Vaishali, and even contained a stupa. V. A Smith believes that Fa-hien's location is the more accurate one to be accepted until some concrete evidence turns up.

Balikachhavi/Valukarama- An area located around 2.1 miles south-east of Vaishali, according to Hieun Tsang, which was donated to Buddha and his followers by a lady called Balika. Hieun Tsang also states that there was a stupa erected at the site. Balikachhavi has also been identified as Valukarama, where the second Buddhist Council was held a century after Buddha's death. Fa-hien gives a more detailed location of the site, claiming that it is close to the Kutagarashala, and the Council Hall was close to the Ashokan Pillar (which in turn explains the pillar's significance).

Beluvagamaka/Veluvagama- A small village located to the south of Vaishali, just outside its gates, where Buddha is said to have become grievously ill, but surprisingly overcame his sickness. It was during this period he had a conversation with Ananda, and realized that he had nothing more to teach his disciples, and that every one of them had to attain enlightenment using their own effort. It is recorded in the Atthakanagara-Sutta that Ananda stayed in the village after the Buddha's death, and he had a conversation with the householder Atthakanagara. It is also recorded that another major disciple of Buddha, Anuruddha, died here.

Kapinachchana- A locality near Vaishali which was the home of Thera Kappitaka, the teacher of Upali. There are two possible theories regarding its name- it was a locality where monkeys and men would arrive frequently to dance; and Kapinachchana may have been the name of a cemetery.

Kalandakagama- A village near Vaishali which was said to be the birthplace of Sudinna, also called Kalandakaputta (named after the village rather than the father). He was the first monk guilty of the Parajika offence (having sexual relations with someone, in this case his wife, after being ordained). The son born from this was called Bijaka, and Sudinna and his wife became renamed as Bijakapita and Bijakamata respectively. It is said that the couple left this world and became Arahants. Buddhaghosha claims that this village was named so because of the abundance of the squirrel population. (Kalandakagama must not be confused with Kalandakanivapa, a woodland in Veluvana at Rajagriha).

Budhi Mai- A hamlet located 10 km from Hajipur which is well known as the site of the Budhi Mai Temple, dedicated to the Goddess Amba (a reincarnation of Shiva's consort Parvati). An annual fair is conducted in honour of the Goddess in the months of July and August, and this event attracts thousands of devotees from across India.



**Figure 13 Footprints relief at Ramchaura Temple**

Ramchaura Temple- Located in the Rambhadra locality, Hajipur, this temple is believed to have been constructed during the Ramayana period, when Ram passed through this region on his way to Janakpur, and during the journey left traces of his footprints behind (it is also believed that he had his Mundan, that is, head-shaving ceremony, conducted at this site). Many devotees flock to this temple to pray at the spot where Ram's footprints were said to have left his mark, and there is an annual celebration of Ram Navami, and a small fair is organized within the temple complex on the eve of its celebration. Several artefacts uncovered after excavating the site have been kept inside the Patna Museum at present.



Figure 14 Pataleshwar Temple

Pataleshwar Temple- A Shaivite temple which is highly revered by devotees, for it is said that the Shiva Linga in the inner sanctum of the temple emerged naturally from the soil, as some locals believe that Shiva himself used to visit the region once a week. The Pataleshwar Temple has an annual celebration of Shivaratri conducted in a lavish manner during the months of February and March.

Lal Keshwar Shiv Temple- Located in Bagmusha, Hajipur, this temple is dedicated to Shiva and is believed to have been established centuries ago (although the main body of the temple was constructed in 2015). Devotees believe that if you are in the presence of this site, you must offer your prayers to Shiva otherwise something inauspicious might happen to either you or someone close to you. Due to widespread belief in this superstition, there is a general atmosphere of peace surrounding the temple complex.

Baithakji Hajipur- Located in the Halebazar locality, Hajipur, Baithakji Hajipur is a temple believed to have been constructed by Gokulnathji a long time ago. The temple is dedicated to Krishna and witnesses grand celebrations during Janmashtami in the months of August and September.

# Folktales of Vaishali

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The **Wolf and the Lioness** tale relates the story of a barber's son who was smitten by a noblewoman from the Lichchavi clan. Not a moment went by that she was not on his mind, and he built up the courage to tell his father that he would not eat even a morsel of food until the day he was wed to her. So, many days passed, and he lay on his bed, hunger driving him mad and only enhancing his longing for the girl.

The barber pleaded with his son to give up his foolish dreams, "Why, son, don't set your mind on forbidden fruit. You are a nobody- a barber's son; this Lichchavi girl is a highborn lady. You are no match for her. I will find you somebody else, a girl of your own place and station." The barber's pleas as well as everyone else's fell on deaf ears, and soon his son passed away, from hunger and heartbreak.

Buddha came to hear of this event during one of his many trips to Vaishali and likened it to another tale he had once heard of a jackal falling in love with a lioness, and eventually having his life stolen away from him by the lioness' elder brother.

This folk tale is highly significant as it is based on the extremely stringent marriage norms of the time in Vaishali. Tibetan sources state, "The people of Vaishali had made a law that a daughter born in the first district could marry only in the first district, not in the second or third; that the one born in the middle district could marry only in the first and second; but that one born in the last district could marry in any one of the three; moreover, that no marriage was to be contracted outside Vaishali."





Figure 8 Legend of Ambapali

**The Legend of Ambapali**-Ambapali was a legendary courtesan from Vaishali whose power and influence in the region were only second to that of the king. There are numerous stories surrounding her, and one of the most popular ones is how she was discovered as a baby under a tree in a mango grove (explaining her name, which literally translates to 'Mango Girl').

Ambapali quickly grew up to become the most beautiful woman across the land, and this was rather alarming as her beauty was so great that several princes and chiefs were ready to go to war with each other for her hand in marriage. To prevent a civil war, the Lichchhavi Republic instituted a decree that the most beautiful woman in the entire region would be automatically appointed to the position of 'state courtesan' (Nagavadhu or Vaishali Janpad Kalyani), who would serve an initial term of seven years as an equal companion to all Lichchhavi leaders.



Thrust into a position of power and an equally high status, Ambapali is said to have never forgotten her roots and became one of the biggest philanthropists in Vaishali, using her connections and wealth to improve the standard of life in the lower socio-economic sections of Vaishali.

Ambapali is also remembered for being a close associate of the Buddha, welcoming him into the city and offering him lavish gifts which he refused. The only offer he accepted from her was a grove from where he could preach to his disciples. What is interesting is that many noblemen and leaders are said to have become patrons of Buddhist circles to please Buddha, in an attempt to get close to Ambapali as they had heard of the budding friendship between the two.

Apart from becoming a pre-eminent Buddhist nun, Ambapali also established an order called the Bhikshuni Sangh to elevate the position of women in both domestic and public spheres of life. She was also a major patron of the arts and letters and had succeeded in raising the status and respectability of earlier disregarded professions like the court dancer. Some people also claim that Ambapali would later become one of Bimbisara's prized mistresses (their association led to him introducing the Rajnartaki system in the Magadha court), and would go on to give birth to a son, Vimala Kondanna, who later joined the Buddhist order. Ambapali was also known to be a great poet:

Black as night, like the down of the honeybee,

Curled and flowing was my raven hair—black silk.

Now, with age, it resembles strands of hemp.

What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

Once fragrant as a basketful of blossoms

Belonging to the gods, my cherished tresses.

Now, with age, they smell like animal fur.

What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

Like a well-planted grove in the forest, thick  
And gleaming was my hair, adorned with combs and pins.

But now, with age, my locks are sparse and thin.  
What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

My hair was a glorious shining mantle,  
Braided and adorned with golden ornaments.  
But now, with age, I am completely bald.  
What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

Like two crescents finely drawn by an artist  
My brows were exquisite, alive with youth.  
Now, with age, they only wrinkle and descend.  
What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

And my eyes, like royal jewels, they shone  
Sparkling and resplendent, long, and wide and black.  
Now, with age, they fade and dim; they shine no more.  
What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

When I was young, my nose was delicate, yet firm—  
A gentle peak, rising from the softness of my cheeks.

Now, with age, my nose is a shriveled shape.

What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

My earlobes were a thing of beauty, like bracelets

Fashioned and finished by a master craftsman.

But now, with age, they hang and droop.

What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

In the past, my teeth dazzled with their whiteness

Shining like the color of the plantain bud.

Now, with age, they are chipped and broken and black.

What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

Once I warbled sweetly, like the cuckoo that lives

In the jungle-thicket in a grove of trees.

Now, with age, my voice is weak and faltering.

What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

I remember: my throat was like a conch-shell,

Well-polished by the sea, delicate and graceful.

Now, with age, my neck is bowed and bent.

What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

Formerly, both my arms were round like crossbars,  
Strong and beautiful. Now, with age, they are weak  
As the limbs of the trumpet-flower tree.

What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

Adorned with golden rings, smooth and soft, these hands

Of mine were fair to look upon when I was young.  
Now, with age, they are like the root-vendor's roots.  
What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

Once my breasts were round and full,

They rose into the air, side by side.

Now, with age, they sag like empty waterbags.

What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

Oh, the beauty of my body, in the past—

Like a sheet of gold, polished to perfection.

Now, with age, fine wrinkles cover it.

What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

Like the elephant's curving trunk, firm and smooth

Were my two thighs. That was in my youth, I know.

Now, with age, they resemble shafts of bamboo.

What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

Smooth and soft, adorned with golden anklets

Once my calves were firm and full. Now, with age

They are like the twigs of the sesame plant.

What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

Once my feet were elegant, like sandals filled

And stitched with cotton from the silk-cotton tree.

Now, with age, they are cracked and wrinkled.

What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

Such was this complex form, I called it mine.

Withered now and old, the abode of aches and pains,

It is the house of age. See the plaster fall.

What the Buddha has said is true—I have no doubt.

There is an interesting folk tale which revolves around Ambapali encountering a Buddhist monk before her encounter with Buddha himself:



One fine day, as the courtesan Ambapali wandered around the forests of Vaishali, she chanced upon a handsome monk who sat in deep meditation under the shade of a mango tree, similar to the one where she had been found as a baby. Mesmerized by the man's calm presence, she quietly followed him in hopes that he too would be trapped by her beauty and strike up a conversation with her.

To her surprise, he did not even register her presence and went about with his daily tasks, until finally Ambapali asked, 'Kind sir, please introduce yourself. Why does one as young as you lead an ascetic life?'

'I follow the path of ascetism in search of Truth', the monk replied, surprising Ambapali with his answer.

'Of what use is Truth when you waste away your precious youth?' Ambapali coyly asked.

The monk smiled and said, 'Dear lady, Absolute Happiness can only be attained through Absolute Salvation. The happiness which you crave for is merely a transitory pleasure.'

Amazed by his wise attitude towards life, she persistently requested him to spend one night with her to continue their discussion. The young monk mused on this and stated that if his master (Buddha) would give him his permission then he would surely come. Before he left to find his master, he took out a ripe mango from his bag and handed it to her with the condition that the mango must remain as ripe as it was then when he returned.

The young monk eventually returned to his master's abode and narrated the incident in question. Much to the surprise of his fellow disciples, who had all heard tales of the unparalleled beauty of Ambapali, the Buddha gave the monk his blessing to stay with her. When later asked why he had done so, the Buddha replied, 'I have looked into his eyes and found not even the slightest hint of lust or desire. He was prepared to accept all the outcomes and I have full faith in his purity.'

The entire trip lasted a month, and by the time he came back to Vaishali he discovered that the mango had become completely rotten. Ambapali had employed various means and measures to keep the mango

fresh, but not a single method worked. When the monk asked for the mango, she reluctantly handed it to him and inquired, 'Dear, of what use is this rotten fruit to you?'

As the monk peeled away the skin of the mango, he spoke, 'Observe, that while the beauty, aroma and taste of this fruit may be gone, the mango-stone inside remains completely intact and free of decay.'

'But what purpose would this stone fulfil?'

'Out of all the parts of a mango, it is this very stone which has the greatest role—to recreate a new vessel for its children to inhabit. Much like the mango-stone, a human's soul will never truly die, and its trials and tribulations will forever be carried on by the next generation. The protection of one's soul is the key to Absolute Happiness. Recognize this truth, oh Ambapali. If you could not preserve a mere mango's outer shell from decaying, how will you preserve your own?'

The courtesan was moved beyond words and asked for the monk's forgiveness for her arrogance. Her chance encounter with the monk prompted her to seek out the Buddha, who would later come visit the region of Vaishali himself, and the two would begin a fruitful lifelong association which would elevate Ambapali to a status of one of the most pre-eminent nuns in the history of Buddhism.

# Fairs and Festivals

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Figure 16 Vaishali Mahotsava Dance Performance

Vaishali Mahotsava- A festival celebrated every year in Vaishali on the 13th day during the full moon in the month of Vaishakh (mid-April) to honour the birth anniversary of Mahavir, the 24th and last Tirthankara of Jainism. Vaishali Mahotsava generally goes on for a duration of three days. This is one of the few festivals celebrated by Digambara and Shwetambara Jain monks alike. A key event which marks every celebration is a procession led by lavishly decked out chariots that carry the images of Mahavira. Jain scriptures are read everywhere and devotees flock to temples to pray. A lot of charity work is also done during this festival, which is celebrated not only in Vaishali but in other regions like Pawapuri, Rajasthan, and Gujarat, which contain a sizeable Jain population and house several pilgrimage sites (for instance, Girnar and Palitana in Gujarat)



Figure 17 Vaishali Mahotsava Cultural Performance

# Luminaries from Vaishali

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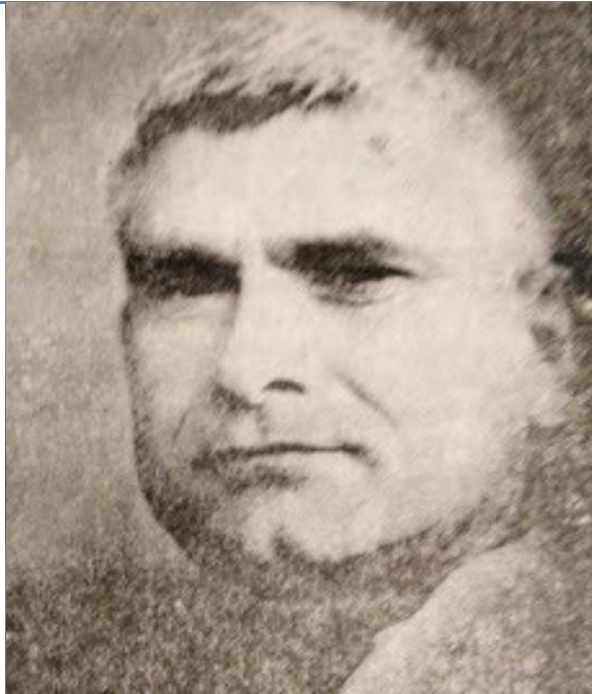


Figure 18 Yogendra Shukla

Yogendra Shukla (1869-1960)- An Indian nationalist, freedom fighter and revolutionary from Jalalpur village who was one of the founders of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) as well as the Congress Socialist Party in Bihar. For leading several revolutionary movements and activities (his exploits made him well-known and a hero among the revolutionaries in India) in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, Shukla was imprisoned by the British government from 1932-1937 in the Cellular Jail (Kala Pani) in the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago. During his sentence he was subjected to extreme torture and punishment which rendered him blind and severely weakened his body.

In 1937 he was transferred to the Hazaribagh Central Jail after nearly dying from his self-inflicted 46 days hunger strike. He as well as his fellow inmates were eventually released in March 1938 due to the efforts of Sri Krishna Sinha (who had formed the first Congress Ministry in 1937 to take up the cause of political prisoners), who managed to make the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow cede to his demands.

After his release Shukla joined the Indian National Congress and was elected Vice-Chairman of the Muzaffarpur District Congress Committee. Later he was also elected as a member of the All-India Congress Committee but transitioned to the Congress Socialist Party at the behest of Jayaprakash Narayan. Shukla was arrested once more in 1940 soon after becoming a member of the Central Committee of the All-India Kisan Sabha in place of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati.



It is said that during the Quit India Movement in 1942, Shukla alongside other freedom fighters scaled the walls of the Hazaribagh Central Jail in a bid to start an underground freedom movement. Such actions led to a bounty of 5000 rupees being issued for his arrest. He was eventually caught on December 7th, 1942, at Muzaffarpur, and government records claim that by this time he had already helped four prisoners (Surajdeo Singh, Ram Babu Kalwar, Brahmanand Gupta and Ganesh Rai) escape from Muzaffarpur Jail. Shukla was imprisoned in Buxar Jail and kept in fetters for a period of three years, and in March 1944 he once more underwent a hunger strike.

He was eventually released in April 1946, and in 1958 he was nominated as a member of the Bihar Legislative Council by the Praja Socialist Party. He would continue to hold this position until his death in November 1960, when he succumbed to long-term scarring and weakness because of his numerous arrests.

Basawon Sinha (1909-1989)- A freedom fighter from Jamalpur, Hajipur who also campaigned for the rights of the underprivileged, industrial labourers and agricultural workers. A brilliant student, he acquired scholarships for education in primary and middle school, later attending Dighi High School. Coming from an impoverished background, he used to teach children much older than him for food and lodging while his mother, Daulat Kher, would scrounge however much money she could (sometimes by gathering and selling bamboo) to meet his other schooling expenses. Sinha would eventually obtain his secondary education from G. B. B. College, where he met revolutionaries like Yogendra Shukla. His association with Shukla and other such revolutionaries led to him being expelled from the college. Thereafter he became involved with Bihar Vidyapeeth at Sadakat Ashram, Patna, where he received intensive military training alongside like-minded youths.



Figure 99 Basawon Sinha

Sinha went into hiding in the aftermath of the Lahore Conspiracy Case, and he was also accused of being involved in the Bhusawal, Kakori, Tirhut and Deluaha conspiracy cases. He would carry on the struggle

against the British in hiding alongside Chandrashekhar Azad and Keshab Chakravarty but was eventually caught and sentenced to seven years in Bankipore Central Jail. After being in prison for a mere three days in June 1930, he escaped, but was quickly caught once more and this time sent to Bhagalpur Central Jail.

During this period, he undertook a fast unto death to protest the inhuman conditions inside the jail, and as his health severely deteriorated by the 12th day of the fast, he was transported to Gaya Central Jail and kept under constant supervision in the prison's solitary confinement ward, before he was shifted to the jail's hospital. Even then he refused to break his fast and, fearing the worst, Sir Ganesh Dutt (then minister of Bihar) requested Sinha's mother to convince him to eat something.

Matters took a turn for the worse for the prison authorities as Sinha's fellow inmates joined his fast in solidarity, but on the 58th day he ended his fast after receiving word from Mahatma Gandhi that their demands had been met. He was eventually released from the prison in June 1936 on account of his poor health, but the City Act was imposed on him so that the district authorities could keep a close watch on his movements. He would go on to violate the clause of the act which led to his arrest once more.

Sinha's time in prison was not a waste, as he had access to the Prison Library and during his imprisonment he became well-versed in geography, political science, philosophy, social sciences and natural sciences.

Once he was released from prison, he became thoroughly involved in trade union movements from 1936 till his death in 1989. He also became a member of the Congress Socialist Party and was appointed as its Labour Secretary. Sinha would go on to establish a number of trade unions in the coal, sugar, mica mining and railway sectors of Bihar and become one of the founders of the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (later becoming its President at the state and central levels). The trade unions he established include Japla Labour Union, Baulia Labour Union, Gaya Cotton and Jute Mill Labour Union, Tata Collieries Labour Association, etc.

Sinha was also highly active in the railway sector, joining the All-India Railwaymen's Federation in 1936 (became the Vice-President, and temporarily Acting President, of this organization in 1946). He later became the President of the Oudh Tirhoot (O. T.) Railway Union and the North-East Railway Mazdoor Union for several years.

Yet again Sinha was arrested in April 1937 alongside Jayaprakash Narayan, Benipuri and a few others for "unconstitutional" activities, and the lot were sentenced for a period of six months. It is interesting to note that during World War II he was the first person in Bihar to be arrested under the Defence of India Ordinance on January 26th, 1940 in Husainabad, Palamau, for organizing an unlicensed procession and delivering an anti-war speech. He was released after 18 months.

When the British Government intercepted the Deoli letter by Jayaprakash Narayan which was addressed to Sinha, he went underground in 1941 and made his way to Afghanistan in order to acquire firearms and ammunition. During his time in hiding, he attended the Bombay AICC session on August 9th, 1942, and conducted the entire movement while in hiding. He was eventually caught in Delhi on January 8th, 1943 and was finally released on April 3rd, 1946.

Post-Independence Sinha became involved in the political scene, joining the Socialist Party which later merged with the Janata Party. During the first General Elections of 1952 he won a seat in the Lok Sabha as a representative of Dehri-on-Sone, becoming an important Opposition leader from 1952-1962. He was also a Member of the Legislative Council from 1962-1968 and would go on to become one of the most powerful Cabinet Ministers (in the department of Labour, Planning, and Industry) in the 1967 Coalition Government. He was forced to go underground during the Emergency period, and in 1977 he would once more represent Dehri-on-Sone and again become the cabinet minister for Labour, Planning, and Industry.

Sinha also represented India in several international trips and conferences. His first time serving as India's ambassador was in Rangoon, Burma, in 1950. In 1951 he was a delegate to the First Asian Socialist Conference held at Rangoon. He led the Indian Delegation at China and Soviet Union to participate in the

May Day Celebration of 1954 and 1956 respectively. In 1956 he represented the Hind Mazdoor Sabha in the annual conference of the Japan Trade Union at Domei. The last official trip he undertook was in 1984, where he visited the United States of America in 1984 after being invited to the American Federation of Labour Congress of Industrial Workers Organization.

In recognition of his services to the country and to the people at large, a commemorative stamp in his name was issued on March 23rd, 2000, by the Government of India. An indoor stadium called Basawan Sinha Indoor Stadium located in Hajipur was also named in his honour.

# Languages and Dialects

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

Assamese- 8 people

Bengali- 191 people

Gujarati- 1 person

Bhojpuri- 1303 people

Bishnoi- 260 people

Braj Bhasha- 777 people. This dialect is derived from Shauraseni Prakrit and has one of the most significant literary traditions in the history of the subcontinent. Braj was also the unofficial main literary language in Central India from the 16th-19th century (until it was replaced by Hindi), popularized through the efforts of poets, writers, and scholars like Mirabai and Harischandra (also called Bhartendu, and considered as the “father of modern Hindi”). Braj mainly utilizes the Devanagari script and employs a vast vocabulary of Sanskrit words.

Dhundhari- 4 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- 37 people

Hindi- 877,160 people

Khortha/Khotta- 11 people. The origins of this language are not clear, scholars are divided on the issue of whether it is a dialect of Magahi, Maithili, or Hindi. While Khortha possesses a rich oral tradition, it has a limited literary one. It utilizes the Devanagari script in its written form.

Magadhi/Magahi- 1151 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- 2 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.

Nagpuria- 28 people

Rajasthani- 9 people

Sadan/Sadri- 21 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 broadcast to regions like Orissa and Jharkhand post-1980.

Surjapuri- 213 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 “Deshi Bhasa”.

Kannada- 1 person

Maithili- 1954 people. An Indo-Aryan language from the Indo-European language family predominantly spoken in the Mithila region. What’s 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).

Theti/Thethiya- 20 people. This language is one of the many dialects of Maithili, and can be found spoken in regions like Kosi, Purnia and Munger, as well as in some districts of Nepal close to Bihar.

Malayalam- 8 people

Marathi- 7 people

Nepali- 20 people

Odia/Oriya- 25 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 a number of 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- 10 people

Sanskrit- 7 people

Santali- 103 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 Ol Cemet/Ol Chiki (an indigenous script created by Pandit Raghunath Murmu in the 1920s).

Telegu- 22 people

Urdu- 167,869 people

Arabic/Arbi- 1295 people

Baori- 1 person

English- 88 people

Lohara- 1 person

Kharia- 15 people. An Austroasiatic language which is a part of the Central Munda subgroup. This language utilizes the Devanagari script, and sometimes the Odia and Bengali script as well. It is classified as one of the official languages of Jharkhand. Kharia also possesses an extremely distant relation with the Juang language.



Kurukh/Oraon- 84 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- 3 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- 13 people. An Austroasiatic language which is a part of the 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.

Bengali- 5 people

# Hindi Tithi Calendar 2020-21: Vaishali

<p><b>January</b></p> <p>10th Jan - Paush Purnima</p> 	<p>Paush Purnima is a significant day in the Hindu calendar. The full moon is the lunar phase when the moon appears fully illuminated from Earth's perspective. In lunar calendar, Magha month starts from the next day of Paush Purnima. During Magha Mahina, people take a holy dip at Triveni Sangam at Prayag; this is considered highly auspicious and important on Paush Purnima day. It is believed that the holy dip on the auspicious day of Paush Purnima liberates the soul from the continuous cycle of birth and death.</p>
<p>15th Jan - Makar Sankranti</p> 	<p>Numerous rituals are followed during Sankranti. These rituals vary from state to state and within a state, region to region.</p> <p>The following rituals are celebrated all over the country:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ritualistic bonfire a day before Makar Sankranti</li><li>• worshipping of rising Surya Deva, the Sun God</li><li>• holy dip in sacred water bodies</li><li>• making Pongal and distributing it as Prasad (in Tamil Nadu)</li><li>• performing charity by giving alms to the needy</li><li>• flying kites especially in Gujarat</li><li>• worshipping livestock</li><li>• preparing sweets with sesame and jaggery</li><li>• taking oil bath, mostly in South India .</li></ul>

24th January - Mauni Amavasya



It is believed that the water of the most sacred and holy river in Hinduism, the Ganga, turns into the nectar on Mauni Amavasya day. Due to this belief Mauni Amavasya day is the most important day in Hindu calendar to take holy dip in the Ganga. According to the beliefs, Mauni Amavasya falls in the middle of Magha month and is also known as Maghi Amavasya.

29th January - Basant Panchami



Vasant Panchami day is dedicated to Saraswati, the Goddess of knowledge, music, arts, science and technology. Goddess Saraswati is worshipped on this day. This ritual of initiating education to children is known as *Akshar-Abhyasam* or *Vidya- Arambham/Praasana*, which is one of the famous rituals of Vasant Panchami.

**February**

9th Feb - Magh Purnima



Magha Purnima is an important day in the Hindu calendar. Religious texts describe the glory of the holy bath and austerity observed during Magha Purnima. It is believed that every single day in the month of Magha is special for doing charity.



21st February - Mahashivratri



Shivaratri is a great festival of convergence of Shiva and Shakti. Chaturdashi Tithi during Krishna Paksha in the month of Magha is known as Maha Shivaratri.

**March**

9th March - Holika Dahan



Holika was a demoness in Hindu Vedic scriptures, who was burnt to death with the help of God Vishnu. She was the sister of King Hiranyakashipu and aunt of Prahlad. The story of Holika Dahan (Holika's death) signifies the triumph of good over evil. It is believed that all sorts of fears can be conquered by doing Holika Puja on Holi. Holika Puja bestows power, prosperity and wealth.

10th March – Holi



Holi is a religious festival celebrated by Hindus all over the world. Holi is considered the second biggest festival in the Hindu calendar after Diwali. Holi is also known as the Festival of Colours. The second day is known as Rangwali Holi, the day when people play with coloured powder and coloured water. Rangwali Holi which is main Holi day is also known as Dhulandi or Dhulendi.

16th March - Sheetala Ashtami



Basoda Puja is dedicated to Goddess Sheetala and is celebrated on Krishna Paksha Ashtami after Holi. Basoda is also known as Sheetala Ashtami. Usually it falls after eight days of Holi but many people observe it on first Monday or Friday after Holi. Sheetala Ashtami is more popular in North Indian states like Gujarat, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. According to Basoda customs, families don't light a fire for cooking. Hence most families cook one day before and consume stale food on Sheetala Ashtami day. It is believed that Goddess Sheetala controls smallpox, chickenpox, measles, etc. and people worship her to ward off any outbreak of those diseases.

#### APRIL

8th April - Hanuman Jayanti



Chaitra month: Hanuman, who is also known as Vanara God, was born on this day and Hanuman Jayanti is celebrated to commemorate the birth of Hanuman. Celebrations at Lete Hanuman and Gore Hanuman temple at Prayag are very famous. Rituals during Hanuman Jayanti:

- Shodashopachara Hanuman Puja
- visiting Hanuman temple
- offering Sindoor i.e. red vermilion to Lord Hanuman.

30th April - Ganga Jayanti



Ganga Saptami day is dedicated to Goddess Ganga. This day is also known as Ganga Pujan and Ganga Jayanti as Ganga was reborn on this day.

According to Hindu Mythology Ganga descended to the Earth on Ganga Dussehra day. Lord Shiva took her in His locks to break Ganga's descent. Later Lord Shiva released Ganga.

## JUNE

1st June - Ganga Dusshera



Ganga Dussehra falls during Dashami Tithi of Jyeshtha Shukla Paksha and falls in the months of May or June. Ganga Dussehra is also known as Gangavataran which means the descent of the Ganga. This festival is dedicated to Goddess Ganga and this day is commemorated as the day when Ganga descended to the Earth to accomplish her mission to purge the cursed souls of Bhagiratha's ancestors. Before coming to the Earth, the Goddess Ganga was residing in Kamandal of Lord Brahma and along with her the Goddess Ganga brought the purity of heaven to the Earth. On Ganga Dussehra devotees worship Goddess Ganga and take a dip in the Ganga. Taking dip in the Ganga and offering charity or Daan-Punya on Ganga Dussehra day is considered highly auspicious. It is believed that holy dip in Ganga on Ganga Dussehra day can purge all type of sins.

**JULY**

05th July - Guru Purnima



During the Ashadha month, full moon day is celebrated as Guru Purnima or Vyasa Purnima. Traditionally this day is reserved for Guru Puja or Guru Worship. On this day disciples offer Puja or pay respect to their Gurus. Guru refers to spiritual guide who enlightens disciples by his knowledge and teachings.

This day is commemorated as the birth anniversary of Veda Vyasa. Veda Vyasa was the author as well as a character in the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*. Devout Hindus observe Guru Purnima as one of the main festivals.




**AUGUST**

3rd August - Hariyali Teej



Teej festivities are celebrated by women in states like Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand. Hariyali Teej is celebrated by women during Sawan month. Hartalika Teej Vrat is observed during Shukla Paksha Tritiya of Bhadrapada month. On this day, makeshift statues of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati are made with the sand and worshipped for marital bliss and progeny.

Hartalika Teej is known by this name due to the legend associated with it.

<p>5th August - Nag Panchami</p> 	<p>Nag Panchami is a significant day and it is observed on Shukla Paksha Panchami during Shravana month. Nag Panchami falls in the months of July or August and women worship Nag Devta and offer milk to snakes on this day. Women also pray for the wellness of their brothers and family. Nag Panchami is a traditional worship of serpent Gods observed by Hindus throughout India.</p>
<p>3rd August - Shrawan Purnima / Rakshabanadhan</p> 	<p>Rakhi, which is also known as Raksha Bandhan, is a Hindu festival which is celebrated across India. Raksha Bandhan is recognized and celebrated among Hindus for its symbolic significance. Raksha Bandhan draws its significance from a sacred thread which is known as Rakhi. It is believed that the thread protects the one who wears it, especially during the auspicious time of Shravana Purnima.</p>
<p>11th August - Janamshtami</p>  <p>23rd August - Rishi Panchami</p>	<p>Devotees, who observe fast on Janmashtami, should have only a single meal a day before Janmashtami. On fasting day, devotees take Sankalpa to observe a day-long fast and to break it on the next day when both Rohini Nakshatra and Ashtami Tithi are over. Rituals performed during Janamashtmi:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a day-long fast</li> <li>• worshipping Bal Krishna at midnight</li> <li>• visiting Krishna temple</li> <li>• cooking sweet dishes specially made of milk products.</li> </ul>



Rishi Panchami is not a festival, but a fasting day observed by women to pay homage to the Sapta Rishis, i.e. the seven sages, and to get purified from Rajaswala Dosha.

Hinduism gives highest priority to purity and there are strict guidelines to maintain purity of the body and the soul. In Hinduism women are believed to be contaminated during their menstrual cycle. During menstrual cycle women are not allowed to enter in the kitchen for cooking, to participate in any religious activities and to touch any family members. Avoiding these guidelines is said to create Rajaswala Dosha. Rishi Panchami fasting is advised to get rid of Rajaswala Dosha.

## OCTOBER

25th October - Dusshera



Vijayadashami is celebrated as victory of Lord Rama over the demon Ravana and also victory of Goddess Durga over the buffalo demon Mahishasura. Vijayadashami is also known as Dussehra and the Prayagraj Dusshera is famous across the country. Apart from Magh Mela, Dusshera is a famous and popular festival in India. Huge crowds gather to pay obeisance to the gods and watch the burning of the effigies of Ravana.



## NOVEMBER



8th  
November  
- Ahoi-  
Ashtami

Traditionally, on Ahoi Ashtami mothers used to keep fast from dawn to dusk for the wellbeing of their sons. The fast is broken during twilight after sighting stars in the sky.

The lore goes: Once upon a time, there lived a kind and devoted woman in a village situated near a dense forest. She had seven sons. One day in the month of Kartik, just a few days before Diwali festivities, the woman decided to repair and decorate her house for Diwali celebrations. To renovate her house, she decided to go to the forest to fetch some soil. While digging the soil in the forest, she accidentally killed a lion cub with the spade with which she was digging the soil. She felt sad, guilty and responsible for what had happened to the innocent cub.

Within a year of this incident, all the seven sons of the woman disappeared, and they were considered dead by the villagers. The villagers assumed that her sons might have been killed by some wild animals of the forest. The woman was very depressed and correlated all the misfortune with the accidental death of the cub by her. One day, she narrated her woes to one of the old ladies of the village.

She discussed the incident, of how she had committed the sin of killing the cub mistakenly. The old lady advised the woman that as atonement for her sin, she should offer her prayers to the Goddess Ahoi Bhagawati, an incarnation of Goddess Parvati by sketching the face of the cub. She was suggested to observe fast and perform puja for the Goddess Ahoi as She is believed to be the protector of offspring of all living beings.

13th November - Narak Chaturdashi



Narak Chaturdashi is a festival celebrated in the month of Kartik, on the 14th day of the waning moon. It is also known as Narak Chaudas, Roop Chaudas or even Kali Chaudas. As per ancient Indian mythology, people revere the Lord of death 'Yamraj' with utmost devotion and adoration. As it is celebrated a day before Diwali, it is also known as Choti Diwali. On this day, people light up diyas at their homes after dusk. By lionising the god of death, people make sure that they are absolved from the clutches of untimely death, as well as pray for better health.

14th November –Deepawali



Diwali is the most significant religious festival among Hindus. The festival spiritually signifies the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, good over evil and hope over despair. In India, Diwali is celebrated all over the country.

Being Amavasya, people also perform Shradha for their ancestors at Sangam. Traditionally, most Puja is performed after keeping a day-long fast. Hence, the devotees observe a day-long fast on the day of Lakshmi Puja. The fast is broken after Lakshmi Puja in the evening.

20th November - Chhatt Puja



The Sun God, Surya, the god of energy and of the life-force, is worshipped during the Chhath Puja to promote well-being, prosperity and progress.

Chhath Puja is also known as Surya Shashti, Chhath, Chhathi, Chhath Parv, Dala Puja and Dala Chhath.

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