

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 Muzaffarnagar and Bijnor Districts

Intangible Cultural Heritage



Cover Page Image: **The Ganges Canal, Roorkee, Saharanpur District (U.P.) by Artist: Simpson, William (1823-1899)**

In August, 1804, the present district of Muzaffarnagar was assigned to Saharanpur. This painting, in the watercolour medium, depicts the beautiful Ganges Canal in Roorkee, Saharanpur. The painting dates back to 1863 and was made by William Simpson.

Source: The British Library

Link: <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/other/019wdz000001012u00000000.html>.

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Muzaffarnagar and Bijnor Districts

Intangible Cultural Heritage

2020-21

Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage

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INTACH Indian
National Trust
for Art and
Cultural Heritage

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MUZAFFARNAGAR DISTRICT



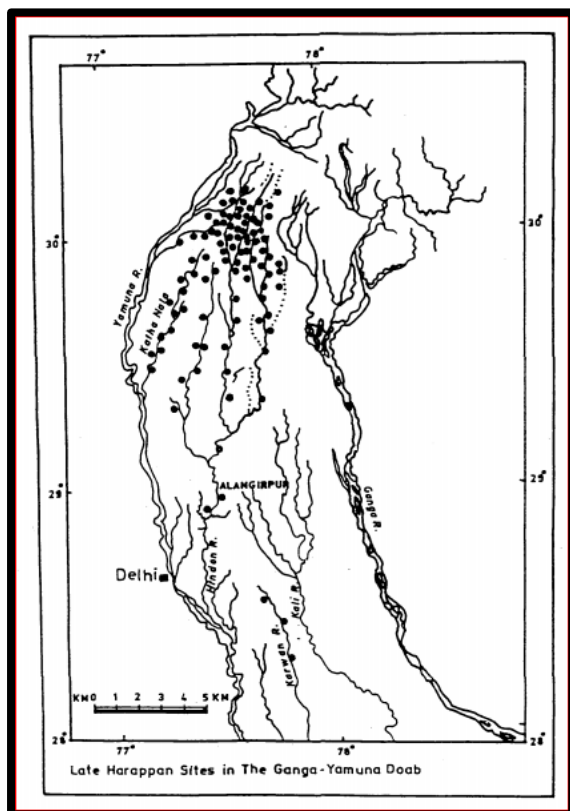
Muzaffarnagar Map

(Source: https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/0902_PART_B_DCHB_MUZAFFARNAGAR.pdf)

History

Muzaffarnagar district, located in the northern part of Uttar Pradesh is popularly known as "The Sugar Bowl of India". It is part of Saharanpur division. The district is named after its headquarters town, Muzaffarnagar, which was founded in the reign of Shahjahan at the site of an old town known as Sarot or Sarwat by his minister, Abdul Muzaffar Khan, in 1633. The district Muzaffarnagar is considered to be very rich in its cultural heritage.¹ However, not many sources have been found detailing the ancient history of the region through literary sources. Therefore, the region must be studied according to the results of "the cultural assemblage, chronological sequence and geographical situation of the archaeological sites of the region under study."²

Proto-Historical Period, Cultural Assemblage, Early Settlement



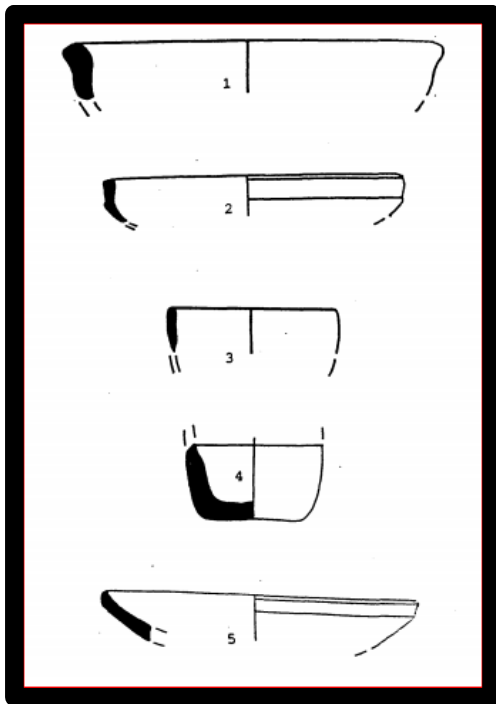
The map illustrates few line drawings of the Late Harappan sherds found in the district of Muzaffarnagar. (Source: https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/52447/12/12_chapter%204.pdf)

¹ O.P. Srivastav, "An Archaeological Study of District Muzaffarnagar," (PhD thesis, Aligarh Muslim University, 2015).

² Ibid.

The district Muzaffarnagar is rich in its cultural heritage, as already mentioned. The various cultures of the doab area have been identified mainly with the help of distinctive ceramics and other associated cultural findings. The exploration suggests that the Late Harappansite is confined to its western area along with Katha Nala, Krishna Nadi, Hindon Nadi etc., all the tributaries of the Yamuna.³ For the pieces of evidence of the occurrence of the Ochre Colour Pottery, a good number of sites are found in this district of Muzaffarnagar.⁴

OCP Bowls



Fragments of OCP bowls with different features.

(Source: https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/52447/12/12_chapter%204.pdf)

The Painted Grey Ware culture occupies a very significant place in the archaeology of the Ganga-Yamuna doab. It is one of the most important proto-historic cultures of India due to its prime association with the Aryans and the early use of iron, giving way to urbanization.

³ Indian Archaeology 1968-69: A Review, 78.

⁴Salim Ansari, "The Ochre Coloured Pottery Culture: A consideration of the evidence," (Diss., Aligarh Muslim University, 2009), 32, 38, 45.

The concentration of the Painted Grey Ware sites in the district Muzaffarnagar is along Hindon Nadi and Kali Nadi.⁵

Painted Grey Ware

The Painted Grey Ware (PGW) culture occupies a significant position in the archaeology of northern India, and especially in the upper Ganga-Yamuna Doab. It is one of the most important protohistoric cultures of India because of its associated use of iron. The PGW was first discovered at Ahichhatra. However, its full significance was recognised only after B.B. Lal's excavation at Hastinapur. Since then more than 650 sites have been explored in different parts of northern India. The PGW levels at sites in Western Uttar Pradesh are sometimes preceded by the Late Harappan culture but with a gap between the deposits of the two cultures.⁶

The ware, as the name indicates, is grey in colour and the colour varies from ash grey to dark steel grey. Generally, the grey surface of the body is painted with lines and dotted patterns in black. The simplest and most elementary patterns is the single horizontal band, which is seen repeated over and over again as a border for more complex patterns.⁷ The commonest patterns are formed by groups of vertical or oblique stroke below the horizontal rim band. The strokes are sometimes of unequal thickness. These are sometimes interspersed with dots. Interesting lines, rows of dots, dots and dashes or groups of wavy lines also appear on some of the pots. The individualistic designs include concentric semi circles, concentric circles, radiating rows of two lines each and hooks rising from a circle or from vertical lines. These designs are generally found on the exterior surface of the pots only.

On the inner base of the dishes appear signals, groups of circles, interesting chains and other indistinct designs. Paintings are executed on the exterior, interior or on both the sides. These grey ware sherds are generally painted with black pigment in various shades. A few sherds show stop-gap painting as well. Usually, the pottery does not show any degeneration.

The grey colour of the pottery is supposed to be the result of its being fired under reducing condition in the kiln, so that the clay did not turn red and was sufficient to blacken the pot. It has a fine to medium grained grey core. It varies in thickness. The majority of the pots have

⁵ Vijay Kumar, "Archaeological Gazetteer of Aligarh & Hathras Districts with special reference to OCP & Other Proto-Historic Cultures of Indo-Gangetic Plains," *Indian Journal of Archaeology*, Vol.4 (2019), 60.

⁶ Srivastav, O.P. "The Painted Grey Ware Sites of Muzaffarnagar District UP." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 56 (1995): page 88.

⁷ Ibid.

been manufactured on wheel, though hand-made specimens are also met with. This pottery when dropped or struck gives somewhat a metallic sound.

The shapes or types of the PGW generally, are represented by the bowls and dishes of various types and sizes. In addition to these common shapes, the miniature vases known as lotas in northern India and fragments of grooved collared basins⁸ have also been found.

In addition to the PGW, coarse Grey Ware generally associated with the PGW of the northern Black Polished ware period has also been found during the course of O.P. Srivastav's exploration in the district of Muzaffarnagar. The clay used for manufacturing this kind of grey ware has some impurities. The pottery of this group shows general decadence. It has a rough surface and is thicker in sections. A few grey ware pieces also show some kind of wash.

A total of 75 PGW sites had been explored within the District of Muzaffarnagar, of these 39 sites were already reported earlier while the remainder have been explored by Srivastav through his personal visits made all over the District. The PGW sites are mostly located along river banks. Among all the PGW sites we find 20 on Kali Nadi, 19 on HindonNadi and 13 on Budhi Ganga.⁹ The other PGW sites were located on the banks of other rivers, like Saloni and Yamuna.

The sites located near Budhi Ganga river are¹⁰:

S. NO.	BLOCK	SITE
1	Jansath	Bhooma
2	Jansath	Jatwara
3	Jansath	Kaithora
4	Jansath	KaliapurJasmore 1
5	Jansath	KaliapurJasmore 2
6	Jansath	KaliapurJasmore 3

⁸ Ibid, page 89.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid, pages 90-92.

7	Jansath	Kheri-Sarai
8	Jansath	Puthilbrahimpur
9	Jansath	Sikereda
10	Jansath	Tikaula
11	Jansath	Tiyarpur
12	Morna	Sikri
13	Morna	Khai-Khera

The average distance from one site to another is about 6 to 8 kilometres. None of the sites located by Srivastav were large and no urban settlements were located. The constant proximity to channels of small rivers or streams suggests small hamlets whose inhabitants raised crops on seasonally flooded land.

Unfortunately, from surface finds alone, one hardly has data enough to say anything more about the artifacts and material life of the PGW people in Muzaffarnagar; which has no associated charcoal or other organic materials. 14-C dates are also not available.¹¹

¹¹ Srivastav, O.P. "The Painted Grey Ware Sites of Muzaffarnagar District UP." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 56 (1995): page 952.

Fig. 1. DISHES

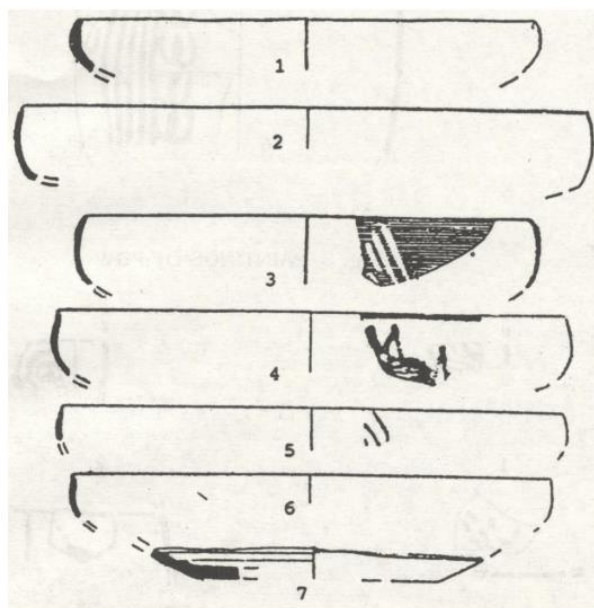


Figure 1 - Dishes

Image Source: Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 56th Session, 1995
(<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44158766?seq=1>)

1. Fragment of a Grey Ware dish having incurved rim, treated with a wash, medium fabric. PGW phase. (Rampur - Muzaffarnagar - Muzaffarnagar).
2. Fragment of a dish having knife edged in-turned rim with a groove externally. Fine fabric. PGW phase. (Lohari - Charthawal - Muzaffarnagar)
3. Fragment of a Grey Ware dish having inturned rim and oblique dashes externally. Probably in reserve slip. Fine fabric. PGW phase. (Niamu - Gharthawal - Muzaffarnagar)
4. Fragment of a Painted Grey Ware dish having vertical sharpened rim internally. Convex sides, fine fabric. Painted in black externally with a rim band indeterminate motif. PGW phase. (Sisona - Muzaffarnagar - Muzaffarnagar).
5. Fragment of a Painted Grey Ware dish having incurved sharpened rim painted in black with two oblique lines externally. Medium fabric. PGW phase. (Sujadu - Muzaffarnagar - Muzaffarnagar)
6. Fragment of a Grey Ware dish having everted rim, convex sides. Fine fabric. PGW phase. (Sujadu - Muzaffarnagar - Muzaffarnagar)
7. Fragment of a Grey Ware dish having flat base and flaring sides, medium fabric. PGW phase. (Rampur - Muzaffarnagar - Muzaffarnagar)

Fig. 2 BOWLS

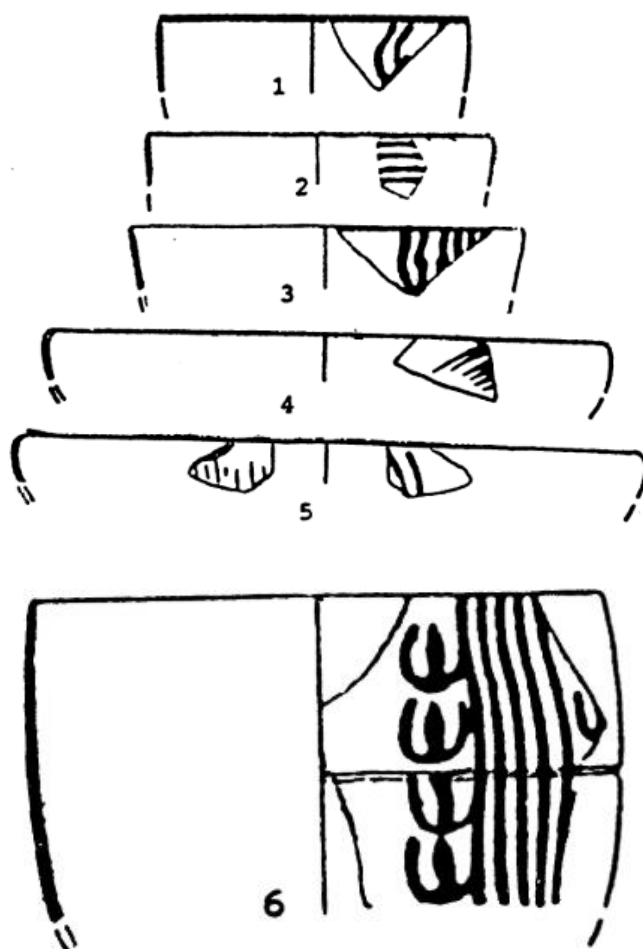


Figure 2 - Bowls

Image Source: Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 56th Session, 1995
(<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44158766?seq=1>)

1. Fragment of a Painted Grey Ware bowl having sharpened rim. Painted in Black with two vertical curved lines externally with a rim band on both sides. Medium fabric. PGW phase (Noornagar - Purkazi - Muzaffarnagar)
2. Fragment of a Painted Grey Ware bowl having featureless sharpened and vertical rim. Painted in black rim bands and horizontal lines externally. Fine fabric. PGW phase. (Noornagar - Purkazi - Muzaffarnagar)
3. Fragment of a Painted Grey Ware bowl having slightly almost vertical sharpened rim. Vertical curved lines externally in black. Medium fabric. PGW phase. (Noornagar - Purkazi - Muzaffarnagar)
4. Fragment of a Painted Grey Ware bowl having incurved rim painted in black with oblique strokes having thin ends. Medium fabric. PGW phase. (Noornagar - Purkazi - Muzaffarnagar)
5. Fragment of a Painted Grey Ware bowl having incurved rim with curved lines externally and vertical and small and thin strokes internally. Medium fabric. PGW phase. (Noornagar - Purkazi - Muzaffarnagar)
6. Fragment of a Painted Grey Ware bowl having incurved rim, almost straight sides. Painted in black externally having parallel vertical lines and 'W' shaped design. Medium fabric. (Noornagar - Purkazi - Muzaffarnagar)

Fig. 3 PAINTINGS OF PGW

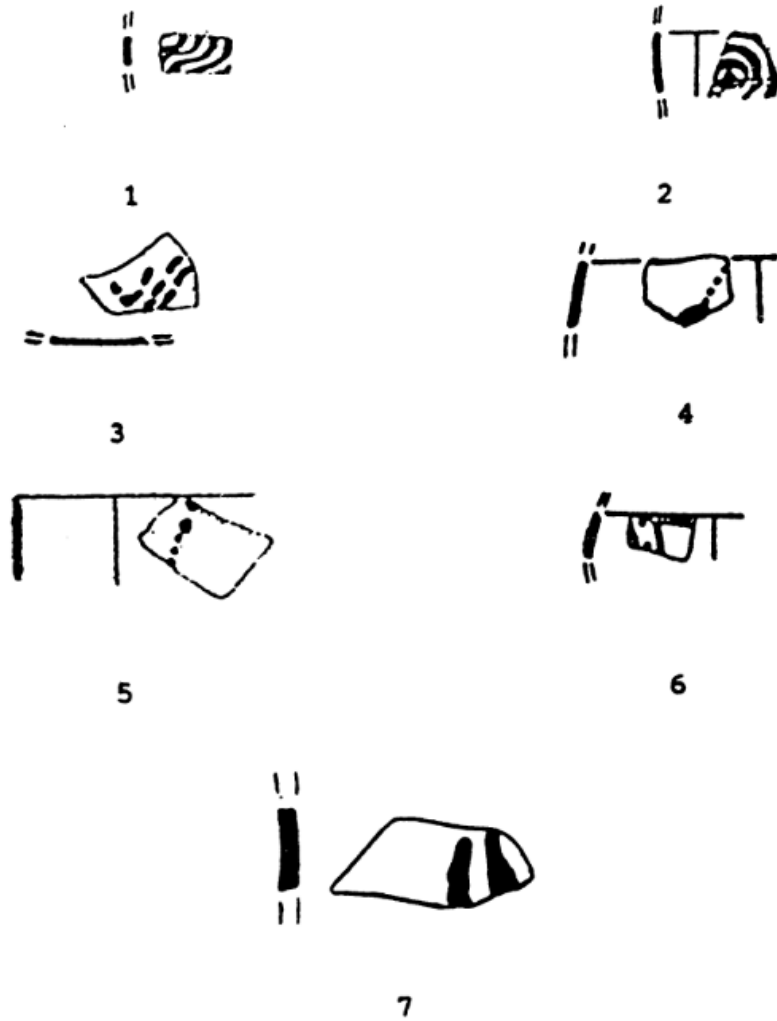
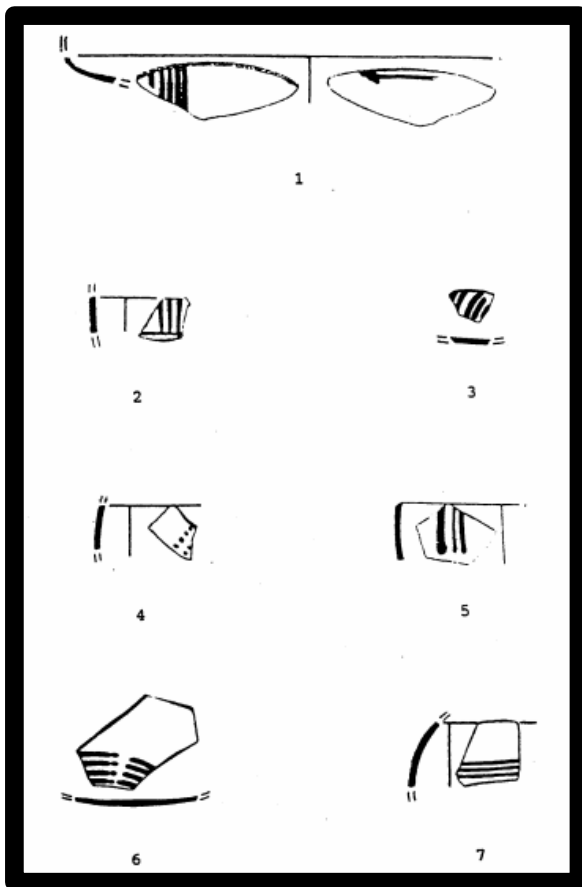


Figure 3 - Paintings of PGW

Image Source: Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 56th Session, 1995
(<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44158766?seq=1>)

1. A Painted Grey Ware sherd having oblique lines internally. Fine fabric. (Noornagar - Puskanzi - Muzaffarnagar)
2. A Painted Grey Ware sherd having concentric circles externally. Fine fabric. (Noornagar - Puskanzi - Muzaffarnagar)
3. A Painted Grey Ware sherd having dashed internally. Medium fabric. (Noornagar - Puskanzi - Muzaffarnagar)
4. A Painted Grey Ware sherd having three dots on a solid indeterminate design in black. Smooth surface and medium fabric. PGW phase. (Khanjahanpur - Cherthawal - Muzaffarnagar)
5. Fragment of a Painted Grey Ware bowl having dots in black externally. Medium fabric. PGW phase. (Sujadu - Muzaffarnagar - Muzaffarnagar)
6. A Painted Grey Ware sherd having dots along with within two vertical lines. Medium fabric. (Khanjahanpur - Charthawal - Muzaffarnagar)
7. A Painted Grey Ware sherd having vertical lines of uneven thickness. Medium fabric. PGW phase. (Kutubpur Datana - Budhana - Budhana)

Paintings of PGW



Painted Grey Ware with different features.

(Source:https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/52447/12/12_chapter%204.pdf)

In comparison with the other cultures found in this district, NBPW is less in number which is generally found along Budhi Ganga and occasionally on Kali Nadi and Saloni Nadi. Therefore, it is obvious that the NBPW culture was not popular in this region.

At village Mandi (Tehsil Sadar) which is in the west of river Kali, in the archaeological site, the recent findings found the roots of district Muzaffarnagar to Harappan civilization. The hordes of gold ring-like objects and other precious stones found at the site proves that the site was part of mature Harappan culture and it was also an important centre of trade.

During ancient times¹² many Harappan sites have been located in the Upper Ganga plain, concentrated in the western U.P. in the district of Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar and Meerut.¹³

The medieval period is generally represented by the redware. It is a well-documented period supported by the architectural remains and other literary sources. The exploration also suggests that the contribution of this region to the repertoire of terracotta art is also quite remarkable. Probably, the tradition of ceramic art reached its culmination in the field of terracotta too. Apart from the different types of pottery, these sites have yielded a good number of stone objects. Some coins were also found in this region. Coins found from Niamu and Jaroda are worth the mention. The coin found from Niamu is recognized as a well-known Sahi coin of Samantdeva. The date of the coins is C. 9th-10th century A.D. Another one belongs to Shah Alam bearing some personal legend. Other coins found from the district belong to Akbar's period. Some other gold, silver and copper coins are reported from the Muzaffarnagar district belonging to the Sri Samantdeva, Shah Alam, Muhamad Shah, Tughlaq Shah, Sher Shah, Farrukhsiyar, Akbar, Shahjahan, etc.



A silver rupee coin in the name of Shah Alam II (1759-1806), Saharanpur, regnal year 46. The East India Company acquired the mint at Saharanpur in 1803 and operated the mint for only a couple of years, before shutting it down in 1805.

Source: <http://coinindia.com/galleries-bengalpresidency.html>.

¹² "Brief Industrial Profile of District of Muzaffarnagar," Government of India, Ministry of MSME, accessed August 14, 2020, <http://dcmsme.gov.in/dips/17%20DIPS%20Muzaffarnagar.pdf>.

¹³ M.N. Deshpande, *The Harappan Settlements in Ganga-Yamuna Doab in Indus Civilization: Problem and Issues*, Simla Seminar, 1977.

The district consists of many fine pieces of architecture in the form of temples, mosques, gateways, havelis, forts, tanks, and baolis, mostly belonging to medieval and pre-modern period. Among them, Ghausgarh and Morna mosques are grand in design and refinement. Other remarkable architectural places are located at Majhera, Jansath, Mirapur, Kairana, etc.¹⁴ There are two ancient temples at Charthawal, one dating back to Jahangir's period and the other about 500 years old.¹⁵ It is worth noting that main cultural sites in the western part of Uttar Pradesh are on the banks of the tributaries of the Ganga and Yamuna.

Archaeological Sites of District Muzaffarnagar

A careful survey of the ancient sites and their antiquities done in this district that is situated in the upper Ganga-Yamuna doab, reveals that it was inhabited by the Late Harappan people for the first time, as there is no evidence of any pre-Harappan remains. During the course of multiple explorations conducted here, the pottery found from the different sites, can be divided into following categories: ¹⁶

- a. Late Harappan
- b. Ochre Colour Pottery
- c. Painted Grey Ware
- d. Northern Black Polished Ware
- e. Early historic
- f. Historic and
- g. Medieval.

A fairly good idea about the general chronology of the archaeological cultures and their geographical distribution is provided by these explorations and excavations in the Ganga - Yamuna doab (Western Uttar Pradesh). However, the Late Harappan sites in Uttar Pradesh are confined to its western area with a heavy concentration in the district Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar. It is attested by the finds of material culture belonging to the Late Harappan, Ochre Colour Pottery, Painted Grey Ware, Plain Grey Ware, Northern Black Polished Ware,

¹⁴ Census 1981, UP, Part XIII- A VILLAGE & TOWN DIRECTORY.

¹⁵ Srivastav, op. cit.

¹⁶https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/52447/12/12_chapter%204.pdf , Pg 1

Black Slipped, Mauryan, Shiinga, Kushana, Gupta, Rajput and medieval period as well. As appears from the evidence that this region was suitable for human occupation and it was a main centre of attraction for the early settlers'.¹⁷

The archaeological sites of this district as are follows:

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES		
District: Muzaffarnagar		
Location Code Sl.No.	Village/Site	Cultures
1.	Alamgirpur	LH, OCP, G
2.	Alipura	CCP, EH, M
3.	Amberpur	LH
4.	Buddha-Khera	EH, M
5.	Badhai-Kalan	OCP, EH, M
6.	Badh	M
7.	Budina-Kalan	GW, BS, EH, M
8.	Badheri	M
9.	Barla	M
10.	Begarajpur	OCP, M
11.	Bhooma	GW, NBPW, BS, M
12.	Bheapur	M
13.	Bhopa	M
14.	Budhana	M
15.	Bahramgarh	LH, OCP
16.	Bhura	LH, PGW, GW, EH
17.	Bhanti-Khera-1	LH
18.	Bhanti-Khera-2	LH
19.	Charthawal	EH, M
20.	Chandan	OCP, M
21.	Chawari	M
22.	Chacharauli	M

¹⁷https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/52447/12/12_chapter%204.pdf , pg 2

23.	Churawala	M
24.	Chandheri	LH, OCP
25.	Desalpur	GW, EH, M
26.	Dholra	EH, M
27.	Dhansani	EH, M
28.	Dhindhawli	GW, EH, M
29.	Duheli	M
30.	Dunger	LH, OCP
31.	Dabbal	LH
32.	Firojpur	M
33.	Gola-Puttha	EH, M
34.	Husainpur-Bopada	OCP, M
35.	Husainpur-Kalan	GW (?), EH, M
36.	Harya Khera	PGW, GW, BS, EH, M
37.	Huzurnagar	PGW, GW, EH
38.	Hatchhoya-1	LH
39.	Hatchhoya-2	LH
40.	Inchauli	PGW, GW, EH, M
41.	Issopur	PGW, GW, BS, EH, M
42.	Jaroda	EH, M
43.	Jamalpur	M
44.	Johra	PGW, GW, EH, M
45.	Jarwar	M
46.	Jatwara	GW, NBPW, EH, M
47.	Jaula	PGW, GW, BS, M

48.	Jasala	LH
49.	Jhal	PGW, GW, EH
50.	Jandheri	LH
51.	Jhinjhana	OCP, PGW, GW
52.	Kasoli	OCP, EH, M
53.	Kasyara	EH, M
54.	Kalyana	GW, EH, M
55.	Kulheri	OCP, PGW, GW, BS, EH, M
56.	Khanjahanpur	OCP, PGW, GW, EH, M
57.	Kanamheri	M
58.	Khudda	EH, M
59.	Kamhera	M
60.	Kharyahanpur	M
61.	Khokni	PGW, GW, M
62.	Kaithora	PGW, GW, BS, EH, M
63.	Kailapur-Jasmor	LH(?), PGW, GW, BS, EH, M
64.	Katia	OCP, EH, M
65.	Kheri-Sarai	GW, NBPW, BS, EH, M
66.	Khartauli	M
67.	Kari	M
68.	Khai-Khera	GW, NBPW, EH, M
69.	Kakrauli	EH, M
70.	Kutubpur-Datana	OCP, PGW, GW, BS
71.	Kamaruodinnagar	LH
72.	Kamalpur	PGW, GW, EH

73.	Kakra	M
74.	Kitas	EH, M
75.	Kairana	PGW, GW,
76.	Luhari	LH(?) PGW, GW, EH, M
77.	Ladwa	OCP, PGW, GW, EH, M
78.	Lachchera	M
79.	Luhsena - Rukanpur	LH(?)
80.	Mahmoodpur	LH(?) OCP, EH, M
81.	Mirzapur	M
82.	Mirapur	PGW, GW, BS
83.	Mimlana	M
84.	Molahari	OCP, M
85.	Mandawar	M
86.	Mansurpur	M
87.	Mubarakpur	LH, OCP, PGW, GW, EH, M
88.	Mujhera	M
89.	Mukallampur	M
90.	Mahmoodpur (Bangar)	M
91.	Makkhanpur	M
92.	Mirapur	EH, M
93.	Mahaljana	LH, OCP, M
94.	Nagla-Rai	PGW, GW, EH, M
95.	Niamu	PGW, GW, EH, M
96.	Nara	M
97.	Noornagar	OCP, PGW, GW, BS, NBPW, EH, M
98.	Nawla	LH, OCP, PGW, GW, NBPW, EH, M.

99.	Nizampur	EH, M
100.	Nala	LH
101.	Nagwa	GW, EH
102.	Pipalsah	OCP, PGW, GW, BS, EH, M
103.	Parai	M
104.	Palari	M
105.	Putthi-Ibrahimpur	GW, M
106.	Purbalian	OCP, PGW, GW, BS, EH, M
107.	Cazikhera	M
108.	Rohana-Kalan	PGW, GW, BS, EH, M
109.	Rasulpur	M
110.	Rai	GW, M
111.	Rampur	PGW, GW, EH, M
112.	Rampur	M
113.	Ramraj	EH, M
114.	Riawli-Nagla	EH, M
115.	Rahatpur	LH
116.	Saidpur	PGW, GW, EH, M
117.	Sikanderpur	OCP, PGW, GW
118.	Singalpur	M
119.	Sarwat	M
120.	Sisona	GW, EH, M
121.	Shermagar	M
122.	Sujadu	PGW, GW, BS, EH, M
123.	Sandhawli	LH(?), OCP, M
124.	Semali	M

125.	Shankarpur	M
126.	Suaheri	M
127.	Sonta	EH, M
128.	Sikanderpur	M
129.	Sikereda	OCP, PGW, GW, NBPW, BS, EH, M
130.	Sambhalhera	M
131.	Sukartal-1	EH, M
132.	Sukartal-2	M
133.	Sikri	OCP, PGW, GW, BS, EH, M
134.	Shikarpur	OCP (?), M
135.	Sarai	EH, M
136.	Sultanpur	EH, M
137.	Sambhalka	LH
138.	Sainpat	PGW, GW, EH
139.	Tughalapur	M
140.	Tikola	GW, EH, M
141.	Tiyarpur	PGW, GW, EH, M
142.	Tandhera	M
143.	Tisang	GW, EH, M
144.	Toda	LH, EH, M
145.	Thana-Bhawan	LH
146.	Ukavali	PGW, GW, BS, EH, M
147.	Unchagaon	PGW, GW, EH
148.	Un	LH
149.	Wahelna	EH, M.

(Image Source: https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/52447/12/12_chapter%204.pdf)

Ancient History

The region, acquiring supreme importance due to the presence of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, has been significant for its contribution to the political, cultural and economic history of India.¹⁸ This region has historically been in existence since the time of Rigveda. The district of Muzaffarnagar was made a part of the region, called Madhyadesa, as has also been cited in the Puranas.¹⁹ The earliest known king, who ruled over this part was probably Pururvas Aila.²⁰ Bharata of the Mahabharata ruled this region later on and also extended his territory from the Saraswati to the Ganga.

According to an old tradition, Muzaffarnagar formed part of the kingdom of the Pandavas of the Mahabharata time frame. During Mahabharata (about 1400 BC), the district was part of Kuru Empire under Parikshita, grandson of Arjun, the third of the five Pandava brothers. According to the Buddha literature, the area of the district in the 6th century B.C. was forming a part of Kuru Mahajanpada.²¹

Archaeological findings show that the district was dominated by Mauryas, Shungas and Kushanas between the 3rd century B.C. and 1st century A.D. In the 7th century A.D. it was included in the principalities under the king Harsh. These territories were visited by Chinese pilgrim HiuenTsiang.²² Kuru was the next renowned king of the Kaurava dynasty and the district which came under his kingdom was called Kuru-desa. His successors came to be known as Kuru or Kauravas, while Pandu's sons were called Pandavas.

From the pieces of evidence, it appears that the Aryans moved eastward and selected Hastinapura for their first settlement on account of its strategic situation in the doab.²³ Hastinapura had later grown as an important town by the time of the Mahabharata war and also became the bone of contention between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The district Muzaffarnagar continued to be a part of Kuru Empire under Parikshita, the grandson of Arjuna, his kingdom comprising the present New Delhi, part of the East Punjab and the upper Ganga-Yamuna doab.²⁴ As stated in the Mahabharata, king Hastin was succeeded by his son Ajamidha, who, in turn, was succeeded by Raksa, Samvarna, etc. During the time of

¹⁸ Makkhan Lal, *Settlement History and Rise of Civilization in Ganga-Yamuna Doab, from 1500 B.C. to 300 A.D.* (New Delhi, India: B.R. Pub. Corp, 1984).

¹⁹ https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/DCHB_A/09/0902_PART_A_DCHB_MUZAFFARNAGAR.pdf.

²⁰ H.R. Nevill, *Muzaffarnagar: A Gazetteer, being Vol. III of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh* (Allahabad, 1903) 117.

²¹ E.J. Rapson, *The Cambridge History of India, Vol. I* (Delhi, 1962), 153.

²² https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/DCHB_A/09/0902_PART_A_DCHB_MUZAFFARNAGAR.pdf.

²³ Marshall, Sir John, *Mohanjodaro and the Indus Civilization* (London, 1931), p. 106.

²⁴ https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/DCHB_A/09/0902_PART_A_DCHB_MUZAFFARNAGAR.pdf Raich audhuri, H.C., op. cit, p. 22; Majumdar and Pushalkar, op. cit, p. 323.

Samvarna's son, this city came into prominence. Though the kingdom was lost temporarily by Janmejaya, it was said to be regained by king Pratip.



A map depicting the sixteen Mahajanapadas, linking their location to the proximity of prime water bodies. Source: <https://www.livehistoryindia.com/cover-story/2019/11/10/the-great-sixteen-mahajanapadas>.

It is traditionally believed that sage Shukadeva had recited the Srimad Bhagavata to Parikshita at Shukartal of Jansath tehsil of Muzaffarnagar district. The Nagas in this region, by this time, had become very powerful and created trouble for Parikshita as well as for his son named Janmejaya. During their regime, due to Naga's invasion²⁵, Hastinapura went through many crises. Janmejaya and his successor controlled the region until Nichakshu came into the picture. But before the city could flourish under the reign of Nichakshu, a mighty flood washed away a considerable part of the city. After the flood, trouble persisted as a major part of standing crops were destroyed by locusts which were also followed by the spread of disease. These circumstances which followed one after another forced Nichakshu to abandon his capital and the Kurus shifted it to Kaushambi in the district of Allahabad.²⁶

The city reappeared again on the political scene during 6th-5th century B.C. and by that time the Kurus had gradually given up their monarchical form of government and had consolidated

²⁵Pargiter, F.E. op. cit, p. 285.

²⁶Pargiter, F.E. op. cit..pp. 5, 65 cf. Ghosh, N.N., The Early History of Kaushambi, (Allahabad, 1935), p.5.

themselves in a republican confederation.²⁷ Thus, the district became a part of Kuru's Janpada, being one of the twelve (The twelve great republication states - Vriji, Malla, Chedi, Vatsa, Kuru, Panchala, Matsa, Sursena, Asmaka, Avanti, Kamboja, and Gandhara; as well as four monarchical states of Kasi, Kosala, Magadha and Anga flourished in the sixth century.²⁸

The Kurus were overthrown by Mahapadma of the Nanda dynasty of Magadha in the middle of the 4th century B.C. Pauranic tradition confirms that Mahapadma destroyed all the Kshatriya families and became the monarch of a vast kingdom extending from Punjab to Magadha, including this district.²⁹ Then, Chandragupta Maurya³⁰, in the latter half of the 4th century (around 321 B.C.), defeated Mahapadma Nanda to rule Magadha. Thus, this district became a part of the great Mauryan Empire too. However, during Ashoka's time, Hastinapura was not in prominence and as such he preferred to install his pillar not at Hastinapur but in Meerut (The pillar was shifted to Delhi by Firoz shah Tughlaq (c.1351-88 A.D.).³¹ However, soon after the death of Ashoka, there was a decline in the Mauryan power and finally, Pushymitra Sunga (187-151 BC) killed the last Mauryan ruler and took the control of the throne.³²

The region covering Muzaffarnagar district came under the control of Pushymitra Sunga in 185 B.C. Soon the Bactrian Greeks, under Demetrious and Menander respectively,³³ overran northern India including Muzaffarnagar district during Pushymitra Sunga's reign. This fact is asserted as some Bactrian coins³⁴ which were found in this district undoubtedly indicates that the Greek armies must have passed through it and invaded the country during the reign of Pushymitra Sunga. Subsequently, the Sakas established themselves in the entire western Uttar Pradesh. A large number of coins of Rajuvula, discovered at various places in the region, particularly in the western part of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, are abundant.³⁵

Since Hastinapura excavation has yielded coins of Mitra dynasty from the early levels of period III, it can be asserted that the region of Muzaffarnagar must have gone under the rule of Mitra kings of the Panchala region after the Mauryas and Sungas. At the beginning of the first century of the Christian era, Panchala was replaced by the Yaudheyas since the clay seal³⁶ and coins suggest that Yaudheya kings must have exercised their political authority over this region.³⁷ The Yaudheya coins have also been found from the middle of the period III of

²⁷Raychawdhuri, H.C., op. cit., p.134.

²⁸B.C.Ibid, pp.21-23.

²⁹Sastri, K.A.N.: Age of the Nandas and Mauryas Patna 1952),p.17.

³⁰Majumdar.R.C, op. cit., p. 104.

³¹ Atkinson, E., op. cit, p.

³² Raychaudhuri, H.C., op. cit, p. 369.

³³ Tripathi, R.S., op. cit., p. 185; cf. Majumdar, R.C.op. cit, pp. 116- 17 vide Varuna, D.P.op. cit, p.20.

³⁴Nevill, H.R., op. cit, vol. III, p. 157.

³⁵Varun.D.P., op. cit, p. 22.

³⁶Thaplyal, K.K., Studies in Ancient Indian Sea/s,(Lucknow 1972), p.21.

³⁷Majumdar,R.C., op. cit., p. 130.

Hastinapura.³⁸ Later on, towards the close of the first century or at the beginning of the second century, the Kushanas occupied the entire region of western Uttar Pradesh and the new regime helped the propagation of Buddhism. This can be confirmed since the Hastinapura excavation has yielded images of Maitreya Bodhisattva and a few other images during period IV of Hastinapura. The region of Muzaffarnagar was not far away from this. The ancient kingdom of Sursena (nearby the region of Muzaffarnagar) had, with their capital at Mathura, which had become a nucleus of the Buddhist activity. The district remained a part of the Kushana empire till the middle of the 3rd century A.D.³⁹



Hastinapur excavation.

Source: <https://www.livehistoryindia.com/cover-story/2019/11/10/the-great-sixteen-mahajanapadas>.

This area remained in prominence till the reign of Vasudeva of Kushana dynasty. However, by the end of the Kushana period, this place became insignificant.

In the middle of the 4th century A.D. the entirety of Uttar Pradesh came under the empire of Samudragupta and it remained under the Gupta rulers⁴⁰ till the beginning of 6th century A.D.

³⁸cf.Lal,B.B., op. cit., Nos. 10 & 11, pp. 149-50.

³⁹Tripathi. op.cit., p.223; Majumdar, R.C. and Pushalkar, A.D.(Ed): History and Culture of the India People (Bombay 1950-60), Voi.III, pp.141-42.

⁴⁰ Majumdar and Pusalker, op. cit, Vol.111 p. 168.

After the decline of the Gupta Empire the region, which covered this district also, came under the sway of Maukharis of Kannauj.⁴¹ With the rise of Vardhanas (606-647 AD), Muzaffarnagar and Hastinapur became part of Thaneshwar and subsequently of the Kannauj kingdom. Though Hiuen Tsang did not visit Muzaffarnagar and Hastinapur, he certainly visited Thaneshwar and Shrugna, the other two important places of the period.⁴² It may be noted here that with the end of the Vardhanas, the region also lost its importance and nothing definite is known even about Hastinapura, up to the middle of 9th century A.D.

In the latter half of the 9th century A.D. when the district became the part of the Gurjara-Pratihara⁴³ Empire. The Pratiharas continued to rule over this district till the beginning of the 11th century A.D. In 1018 A.D. they were dominated by Mahmud of Ghazni.⁴⁴ Though a few silver coins with Bull and Horseman belonging to Spalpatideva and Samantdeva⁴⁵ period of Ohind of the Hindu Shahi dynasty of the 9th century A.D. have been found during the course of exploration of the district from the village Niamu, these coins do not indicate any supremacy over Pratiharas but close contact between the two royal families. Later on, before the takeover by Prithviraj, this district became a part of the dominion of the Tomars of Delhi in the 12th century A.D.

Prithviraj Chauhan⁴⁶ occupied the kingdom of Delhi during 1178-92 A.D. Under him the eastern track of the district Khudi (old name of Shikarpur) and Baghra⁴⁷ were seats of petty rulers (Raja), subordinate to him. Prithviraj lost his control over this district's terrain when he got defeated in the second battle of Tarain in 1192 A.D. by Shahab-ud-din Gouri.⁴⁸ The main settlers then in Muzaffarnagar district and its vicinity were Brahmans and Rajputs. Jats occupied the whole southern portion of the district. At a later date, Gujars took possession of the poor tract, which the Jats had left unoccupied.

Medieval History

Soon after the Slave Dynasty (Mamluk Dynasty) established its hold at Delhi and its surrounding areas, Muzaffarnagar came under Muslim occupation. Since then, Muzaffarnagar remained a dependency of various dynasties, which ruled at Delhi and Agra until the final dissolution of the Mughal Empire. During the Muslim rule, the area formed part of Delhi

⁴¹ Tripathi, R.S. op. cit., pp. 289-90, 297.

⁴² Cunningham, A, The Ancient Geography of India (Varanasi 1963) pp.277, 292; Nevill, H.R., op. cit., p. 157.

⁴³ Mishra, V.B.: The GurjaraPratiharas and Their Times (Delhi 1963) p. 24.

⁴⁴ Tripathi, R.S., History of Kannauj to the Moseim Conquest (Delhi 1959) pp. 284-86.

⁴⁵ Brown, C.J., The Coins of India, (Lodon 1922) p. 53; Majumdar R.C., op. cit, p. 300; Trapathi, R.S. op. cit, pp.340-41 vide Varun D.P. op. cit, p.21.

⁴⁶Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XVIII, p. 85.

⁴⁷ Atkinson, E., op. cit. Vol. III, pp. 582-85.

⁴⁸ Tripathi, R.S.: op. cit., p. 36.

Sultanate and was ruled by Mohammad Ghauri and then ruled by Mohammad Tughlaq. After the battle of Taraori in 1192 A.D., Prithvi Raj Chauhan was defeated and the domination of the district came under the sway of Shahab-ud-din Ghauri. He left Qutab-ud-din Aibak in charge of his conquered territories, including the area covered by this district.⁴⁹ Qutab-ud-din-Aibak started consolidating his hold over his possession.⁵⁰

During the early period of 13th century A.D., the Jats who by now had risen into prominence in the district did not allow the Muslim conquerors to establish themselves.⁵¹ The Hindu agricultural castes of Siyani and Bisnoi were driven out by the Muslims on the other hand, with the support of the armies of the Slave kings. The Jats of Sisauli (the seat of the Chaudhry of the Khap Baliyan) raided the village three times but failed to conquer it. Finally, it was conquered in 1305 by a Baliyan Khap leader, Ram Rao Rana. The Muslim agricultural population was driven out by the Jats, who then appropriated the agricultural lands. The victory over this village was also a victory over the neighbouring villages. The quick collapse of the various Muslim dynasties in northern India (before the advent of the Mughals in the sixteenth century) made it possible for the Jats to consolidate their conquest over the area, which now comprises the khap Baliyan.⁵² Thus, a political organization formed under Sarva Khap was to protect the territories of Khaps from the invaders. However, it is not known how far they resisted Qutub-ud-din-Aibak. But as far as Iltutmish is concerned, they acknowledged his supremacy.⁵³ In 1255 A.D., the Jats protested against the imposition of taxes on religious worship and festivals.⁵⁴ In 1267 they again protested but were dominated by Ghiyas-ud-din.⁵⁵

Period V of Hastinapura⁵⁶ has yielded a coin of Ghiyasud-din Balban (1266-87 A.D.), which testifies the above fact. Some coins of Balban have also been found from the village Barala of this district (housed in an Archaeological Museum at Muzaffarnagar).

After the Slave Dynasty, the district became a part of Alauddin-Khilji's (1296-1316 A.D.) empire.⁵⁷ Some silver coins of Alauddin Khilji have been found from Muzaffarnagar city.⁵⁸ During the reign of Alauddin Khilji, the Sarva-Khap council held a meeting at Shikarpur (Khap Baliyan) and they decided to protest against forcing the local Hindus peasantry to pay one-half of the gross produce of their land, house tax, and grazing tax on all milk cattle. Ram Rao Rana, Khap Baliyan and army leader, conquered the village Soron, a stronghold of the

⁴⁹https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/DCHB_A/09/0902_PART_A_DCHB_MUZAFFARNAGAR.pdf pg 22.

⁵⁰ Habibullah, A.B.M.: The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India, (Allahabad 1961), p. 82, vide Varun, D.P., op. cit., p. 21.

⁵¹ H. R. Nevill Government Press, 1920 - Muzaffarnagar (India: District), pg 157.

⁵² The Political System of the jats of northern India, M. C. PRADHAN, Reader in Anthropology Karnataka University, Dharuiarpg 21.

⁵³ Prasad, Dr Ishwari, History of Medieval India. (Allahabad 1928) p. 138; Habibullah, op. cit., pp. 254, 261-62.

⁵⁴ Pradhan, M.C., op. cit., pp. 254, 261-62.

⁵⁵ Balban (Haig, Sir W. (Ed), Cambridge History of India vol. III (Delhi 1958), p. 73.

⁵⁶ Of. Lai, B.B., op. cit, p. 102.

⁵⁷ Prasad, Dr Ishwari, op. cit., pp. 182-199.

⁵⁸ Information received from the State Museum U.P. vide Varun, D.P., op. cit., p.22.

Muslims, as well as the adjoining areas. Soron, ultimately, became the military stronghold of the Khap army and the seat of the hereditary vizirs of Khap Baliyan.⁵⁹ It is evident from the discovery of some coins of Gayasuddin Tughlaq, the first ruler of Tughlaq dynasty in the district that he had his sway over Muzaffarnagar.⁶⁰

During the reign of Muhamad-Tughlaq (1325-51 A.D.), the second ruler of this dynasty, the famous Jain teacher and saint Jinaprabhusuri came to Delhi and obtained an order (farman) from the king to visit Hastinapura along with his disciples.⁶¹ The village Tughlaqpur, probably named after Muhammad-bin Tughlaq, also proves that he exercised his authority over this district as well.⁶² The district suffered a lot along with other parts of the doab with heavy taxation under Muhammad Tughlaq⁶³ during 1331-32 A.D. His successor Firozshah Tughlaq was, however, liberal. He tried to lighten the fiscal burden on the cultivators of this doab district by reducing the land revenue demand and providing irrigation facilities.⁶⁴

The first notable event connected with the district Muzaffarnagar, in Persian record, is Taimur's march through the district in January 1399 A.D. The district was overrun by the invading hordes of Taimur from Central Asia. After the sack of Meerut, the conqueror marched northwards either through Firozpur in pargana Hastinapura of Meerut district or Firozpur in pargana Bhukerheri of the Muzaffarnagar district (Tughlaqpur in pargana Pur Chhappar). While he was encamping there, he heard that Hindus had assembled at forts of the Ganga. Taimur then sent on a force of 500 horsemen to disperse the enemy and marched with the remaining force to Tughlaqpur. Soon information was received that a force of Hindus was coming down the river in forty-eight boats with the intention of fighting. Taimur then marched on a horse with one thousand troops to crush them.⁶⁵ After this fight, Taimur returned to Tughlaqpur and then crossed the Ganga and came up to Bijnor district. Babar, too, in his fifth expedition, passed down the Doab through this district. But for many years we don't have any information on it or its people. Taimur left the region in a state of utter confusion.

The Sarva Khap council held a meeting in 1403 A.D. at Shikarpur in Khap Baliyan for raising an army to protect the Khap, areas agricultural produce, life and property.⁶⁶ By this time Sheikhs, Saiyids and the Pathans had occupied the region. No Muhammadan settlement of any importance seems to have been made until the arrival of the Saiyids. The Saiyids of Barha, who played an important role in this region, is stated by tradition to have settled down in the

⁵⁹Ibid., 253.

⁶⁰ Srivastav, O.P, op. cit.

⁶¹ Cf. Jain, J.P., Hastinapura (Hindi), (New Delhi 1955) p. 12.

⁶² Nevil, H.R., op. cit., p. 332.

⁶³Ziya-ud-din Barani: Tarikh - i- Firuzshahi, (Hindi translation of extracts by Rizvi: Tughlag Kaleen Bharat, Part I pp. 40-41.

⁶⁴ Habib, M. and Nizami, K.A.: Comprehensive History of India, (1206-1526) p. 539.

⁶⁵Nevill, H.R., op. cit., vol. III pp. 157-58.

⁶⁶ Majumdar and Pushalkar, op. cit., vol. VI, p. 121.

district seven generations before the time of Akbar. Towards the latter half of the 14th century, they influenced the local history of the district. Later on, this district was adopted by the Saiyids of different clans. During the Mughal period, this area became a favourite resort of royal nobles of Mughal court and many of them obtained jagirs here. The history of Barha Saiyids is intimately connected with this district. But the derivation of the word 'barha' is very uncertain.⁶⁷

The district continued to be under the sway of the Lodi Sultans of Delhi and witnessed considerable political activity under them.⁶⁸ In the reign of Ibrahim Lodi at a later date his authority became shaky and due to his policies, his nobles became disloyal. Babar, taking advantage of the situation, in the later days during his fifth expedition, passed the doab through this district,⁶⁹ reached Panipat in 1525 A.D and defeated the Lodis. Rana Sangram Singh, Khap leader, fought the battle of Khanwa, but was defeated by Babar. Thus, the area including this district of Muzaffarnagar passed under the sway of Babar. Khap Panchayats extended their support to Ibrahim Lodi in 1517; then in 1527 Khap Panchayats did help Maharana Sangram Singh against Babar. This period witnessed the growth of the power of Jat Khap Panchayats.⁷⁰

After Babar, his son Humayun took over in 1530 A.D. and the area including the district Muzaffarnagar also passed into the control. The Saiyids of Barha occupied posts of some importance under the Surs because the arrival of Saiyid Mahmud in Akbar's camp is recorded by all historians as an event of importance. Saiyid Mahmud Barha of the Kundliwal House was the first Barha Saiyid to have joined Mughal service. Before entering the Mughal service, he was in the employment of Sikander Afghan. He deserted Sikander during the siege of Mankot and came over to the Mughals.

Traditionally, it is claimed that from Ghazni his four sons arrived in India in the army of Shihabuddin Ghauri. These four sons, Saiyid Abul Fazl, Saiyid Abul Fuzail, Saiyid Daud, Saiyid Najmuddin, settled in Tihanpur, Chatbanauri, Jajner and Kundli villages in Punjab respectively. The families retained these names when they migrated to localities within the present Muzaffarnagar District of Uttar Pradesh and are still known by these names.⁷¹ During the Mughal period, the Saiyids of Barha occupied a prominent position and played a significant role to strengthen the Mughal Empire. For the history of the doab comprising the modern district of Muzaffarnagar during the Mughal period, a historical account of the Saiyids of Barha

⁶⁷https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/DCHB_A/09/0902_PART_A_DCHB_MUZAFFARNAGAR.pdfpg 3,4.

⁶⁸ Tripathi, R.R.: Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire (Allahabad 1960) p. 28.

⁶⁹ Nevill, H.R., op. cit, p. 158.

⁷⁰ Thenua, B. (2016). Khap Panchayats among the Jats of North-West: A Socio-Historical Interpretation of Medieval Period. IRA-International Journal of Management & Social Sciences (ISSN 2455-2267), 5(3), 402-407.

⁷¹ Nevill, p. 160.

is indispensable. According to Ain-i-Akbari⁷² the Saiyids of Barha during Akbar's period formed a characteristic element in the population of the Muzaffarnagar district.

No accurate chronological account is available about the origin and history of the Saiyids of Barha. Several views are given about the derivation of their name Barha. One view is based on their preference to live outside (bahir) the city of Delhi. Another opinion is that it is taken from 'Abrar' i.e., the Pure Saiyid. Still, another view is that since they were Shias and followers of twelve Imams, they called themselves 'Barhas'.⁷³ Jahangir in his memoirs writes that "they call twelve bara in Hindi". As in the Doab, there are twelve villages near each other which are the native country of these Saiyids, they have become known as "Saiyids of Barha".⁷⁴ During the reign of Akbar and Jahangir, the Saiyids of Baraha were given this name,⁷⁵ and reference of this can be found in both *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* and *Tuzak-i-Jahangiri*⁷⁶.

In the later part of Mughal era famous Saiyed brothers, Hasan and Abdulla, have great influence. In the days of Akbar's reign, the entire district belonged to Sarkar of Saharanpur except for Pargana Kandhla, which was then part of Sarkar of Delhi.⁷⁷ At that time, the Pargana of Muzaffarnagar was known as Sarvat; later this was changed to Muzaffarnagar in the empire of Shahjahan. During the reign of Akbar and his successors, this district became a favourite resort of the noble of the court, many of whom obtained jagirs here. Sheikh Hasan or Hassu, son of Sheikh Bina (Bhaniya) of Panipat, rose to great prominence under Jahangir and received the title of Mukarrab Khan. Both father and son were surgeons by profession.

The main places where the Saiyids of Barha still live are Miranpur, Khatauli, Muzaffarnagar, Jaoli, Tisang, Bakhera, Majhera, Chataura, Sambhalhera, Tilang, Bilaspur, Morna, Sardhaoli, Kaila, Odha and Jansath, etc. During the reign of Akbar (1556-1605 A.D.) the Saiyids of this district rendered singular service. The district was brought under the sway of Akbar, after the second battle of Panipat in 1556 A.D., in which he was helped by a prominent Barha Saiyid, Mohammad Khan⁷⁸ of Kundliwal, a resident of Mujhera.

Internal autonomy and religious freedom were granted to the khap councils under Sarv Khap by Akbar through certain mandates. The Khap councils were given complete freedom in judicial matters, and their leaders were recognised by the Delhi court. They had the freedom to carry out their social and religious functions under their customs and laws. The Jazia or the religious tax was also abolished.⁷⁹ Thirty-three coins of Akbar's reign have been found in the

⁷² Ibid. Vol.I.p.427.

⁷³ Nevill, p. 160.

⁷⁴ Nevill, p. 162.

⁷⁵ There is perhaps no town or village connected with them bearing the name of Barha, Cf.Irvine, op. cit, Vol. I &II, p.202.

⁷⁶ Ain-i-Akbari I,p. 390 vide H,R. Nevill, op. cit, Vol. III, p.161.

⁷⁷ AbulFazl: Ain-e-Akbari (Jarrett H.S.) Vol.II, P. 291-97.

⁷⁸ Atkinson, E., op. cit., p. 59.

⁷⁹ Pradhan, op. cit, p. 106.

village of Garhi.⁸⁰ During Jahangir's regime, Barha Saiyids rendered unique services. Sheikh Hasan is one of them who rose to great prominence. Besides being a mighty soldier, he was a renowned surgeon. Sheikh Hasan was awarded the title Muqurrab Khan by Jahangir and subsequently, he became popular as Muqurrab Khan.⁸¹ A silver coin of Jahangir, issued in 1623 A.D., has been found in the village Sambhalhera of this district.⁸² There are several monuments of Jahangir's period which have been described elsewhere. However, Muqarrab Khan built a large tank in Kairana: Nurjahan, the queen appreciated it very much.⁸³ According to a tradition Nurjahan had a residential place in Nurnagar.

During the reign of Shahjahan, the Saiyids of Tihanpuri branch had earned the imperial favour. Muzaffar Khan was honoured with the title of Khan-i-Jahan. He was also bestowed with the jagir of forty villages in Pargana Khatauli and Sarwat. Muzaffarnagar was founded in about 1633 A.D. (before that date the area was known as Sarwat).⁸⁴ Muzaffar Khan laid the foundation of a new town at Sarwat (at that time the Sarwat was almost deserted). His son Saiyid Abdul Mansur Khan completed it and named the new town Muzaffarnagar.⁸⁵ In due course of time the town became a full-fledged district. The name of Saiyid Abdul Mansoor Khan is preserved in the name of village Mansurpur, in Pargana Khatauli.⁸⁶ Several gold and silver coins of Shahjahan have been found in Sambhalhera and Jansath.⁸⁷ A number of mosques and sarais were constructed during the reign of Shahjahan.

The Saiyids of this district also rendered services in the reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707 A.D.). They also participated in his military campaign.⁸⁸ During Aurangzeb's period, several mosques and forts were built. To conclude, the district has a rich historical record of events, ups and downs, political rivalries, takeovers and overthrows of dynasties. In 1763, Sikhs invaded Saharanpur and ravaged this area. After this, there were several attempts to dispose of the ruler and set their political authority. After Ghulam Qadir took over, he sternly dealt with Sikhs and they never dared to trouble him again.⁸⁹

After the capture of Meerut and execution of Ghulam Qadir in 1788 at the hands of the Marathas, the latter soon marched southwards through Muzaffarnagar and annexed the northern districts of which Ghani Bahadur of Banda became the first Maratha Governor.⁹⁰ On the death of Madhoji Sindhia in 1794 A.D, the Sikhs across the Jamuna were ready for further raids. The Sikhs thus invaded again in 1795 A.D. and succeeded in driving the Maratha garrison

⁸⁰ Information received from the State Museum, U.P. vide Varun, D.P, op. cit., p. 25.

⁸¹ Atkinson, E. op. cit, p. 589.

⁸² Information received from the State Museum U.P. vide Varun, D.P., op. cit, p. 25.

⁸³ The Tuzuk-I-Jahangiri, Vol., II, pp. 111-12. cf. Nevill, H.R., op. cit, p.332.

⁸⁴ Jarett, H.S., op. cit, vol. II, p. 297.

⁸⁵ Atkinson, E., op. cit, p. 600.

⁸⁶ Ibid pp.702-03.

⁸⁷ Information received by State Museum, U.P. vide Varun, D.P. op. Cit., p. 26.

⁸⁸ Atkinson, E., op. cit., p. 686-87.

⁸⁹ Nevill-Bijnore, A Gazetteer, Part 14, pg 177.

⁹⁰ Nevill-Saharanpur, A Gazetteer, Pg-195.

from Saharanpur. George Thomas, the newly appointed Governor of Saharanpur by Lakwadada went to their rescue.

Freedom Struggle

In November 1801, the treaty of Lucknow was concluded and it gave the British the Lower and Central Doab, Gorakhpur, and a great portion of Rohilkhand. This was followed by a treaty of Bassein, which Sindhia considered so injurious, that at once war was declared. The British marched upon Delhi and defeated a Sikh contingent under Louis Bourquien expelled the Mahrattas, and eventually, Muzaffarnagar came into their possession with the remainder of the conquered provinces. After the conquest in 1803, the district was attached to Moradabad. In August 1804 the area comprising the present district of Muzaffarnagar was assigned to Saharanpur. For the first two years, the part of the district was administered by a resident of Delhi, until when the entire area was divided into northern and southern charges under the collector stationed at Saharanpur and Meerut. ⁹¹



In August, 1804, the present district of Muzaffarnagar was assigned to Saharanpur. This painting, in the watercolour medium, depicts the beautiful Ganges Canal in Roorkee, Saharanpur. The painting dates back to 1863 and was made by William Simpson.

Source: <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/other/019wdz000001012u00000000.html>.

⁹¹https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/DCHB_A/09/0902_PART_A_DCHB_MUZAFFARNAGAR.pdf.

The entire Doab rose in their rear, and in October 1804, Sher Singh of Burhiya and Rai Singh led the last great Sikh expedition across the Jumna by Rajghat opposite Sultanpur. After a small skirmish with the Sikhs in 1804, Colonel Burn returned to Saharanpur, and early in the next January drove out small parties of Sikhs who had advanced as far as Muzaffarnagar on a purely plundering expedition. With the advent of British, many of the Saiyids who had left the district returned, but many, and indeed most of them had been so long away that they were unable to prove their title to their ancestral land. But a danger awaited the Saiyids, both the returned emigrants and the surviving residents, which in the words of Mr. Cadell was more fatal to them. A letter preserved in the Board's Records, May 24th 1805, gives a very interesting account of the state of the district generally at that time. It was written by Mr. Guthrie on the occasion of his handing over the office of Magistrate of the Southern division of Saharanpur to the newly appointed Magistrate resident at Meerut.

It was in 1824 when the district was formed by creating a sub-collectorship at Muzaffarnagar, with revenue Jurisdiction over the parganas of Muzaffarnagar, Baghra, Shamli, Bidauli, Jhinjhana, Charthawal, Khatauli, Jauli, Purchhapar, Gordhanpur, Bhokerheri, Jansath, Soron and Lalukheri.⁹²

Soon, the British established themselves in India, and in 1826 Muzaffarnagar became a revenue district of the East India Company regime. In 1826, the sub-collector ship was converted into a regular district and further changes took place. Since then, further changes were of minor importance. The Rajputs, Tagas and Bratonans are said to be the early colonists of this district; traditionally this was followed by Jats.⁹³

In the north of the eastern parganas Taga, Gujar, Jat and Rajput communities were invested with proprietary rights, whilst, in the exceptional cases, Saiyids were declared proprietors, and the money-lenders who had purchased, in some cases, the rights of Saiyids, and in others those of the representatives of cultivating communities, received the fullest consideration. The representatives of the old Gujar Rajas were allowed to retain only those estates to which no adverse claim of any strength was made. To the south, Saiyids were confirmed in full possession of the proprietary right in those estates which their ancestors had acquired. Consequent upon the settlement of 1838-40 the next great series of change took place in 1841. The district has a history of active participation in the freedom struggle during the twentieth century. The people of the district took part in all the movements initiated by the great national leaders. During the first struggle for freedom in 1857, a lot of events unfolded in the district. During that period, British property was destroyed and the treasury was looted. British officers and soldiers were killed. But this reprisal against British rule was ruthlessly crushed.

⁹² Census of India 1981, Uttar Pradesh, series 22, District Census Handbook: Part XIII A village and Town Directory, District Muzaffarnagar, (Lucknow).

⁹³ Ibid.

The history of mutiny in this district presents a marked contrast to the account given of the neighbouring district, Saharanpur. This account is taken from Mr R.M. Edwards' official narrative, dated November 16th, 1868. When the outbreak at Meerut, on the 10th of May, took place, Mr. Berford, the Magistrate of Muzaffarnagar, was at Saharanpur and at once returned to his district. He was then met with the most exaggerated reports of a general rising throughout the Doab, and he hastily issued orders that all the public offices should be closed. The effect of this measure was the impression that the British rule was suspended throughout the district and rumours of the rapid approach of mutineer troops gained ground. All the public offices were burned down on 14th of May and Mr. Grant believed that the destruction of the records was brought about by the Saiyids and that they had spread false tales of approaching mutineers.

During the first struggle for freedom in 1857, a lot of action was seen in the district. Mohar Singh of Shamli and Saiyed-Pathans of Thana Bhawan fought against the British and captured the Tehsil of Shamli.⁹⁴ This attack at Shamli Thana Bhawan was headed by Qazi Mahbub Ali and his nephew Inayat Ali Khan, who was captured. The rebels murdered 113 men in cold blood and the ferocity of the musalmans was shown by the slaughtering of all who took refuge in the mosque and temple adjacent to the Tehsil. But later on, the British army showed its brutality and recaptured the area. A lot of freedom fighters were killed by them and this attempt failed.⁹⁵

The history of the district since the mutiny has been very uneventful. The chief occurrences worthy of record are the two settlements of the land revenue; references have also been made to the famines and years of scarcity that have occurred since 1857, and to the great development of irrigation and its effects in the region.

Modern History

After these attempts, the course of the Indian National Movement changed and the Indian National Congress came to the fore. The educated elite took the path of peaceful constitutional methods. On the 6th of April, 1919 the office of Indian National Congress was opened. The freedom struggle in Muzaffarnagar was guided by the national movement in India. A lot of police atrocities took place in the district. Many freedom fighters were put in jail on fabricated charges, but they refused to be cowed down. In 1939, the 10th district political conference was held at Muzaffarnagar on 23rd December, under the President-ship of Purshottam Das Tandon, who appealed to participants to suspend all aid to the British government. The Quit India movement of 1942 saw lots of activities in Muzaffarnagar as well. Mr. Hardam Singh of Bhera made the declaration of Independence. A lot of students of the

⁹⁴<https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/history/>.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

district went to jail. But their enthusiasm was not weakened by the police torture. Mr. Keshav Gupta's residence was the venue of the flag hoisting ceremony on the day of independence when India had its 'Tryst with Destiny'. Pt. Sunder Lal, Lala Hardayal, Shanti Narayan of Khatauli are some of the most famous names of intellectuals who were related to the national movement. Apart from them, there is an unending list of people who sacrificed their lives during the freedom struggle.

Liyakat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, was from Muzaffarnagar.

Thus, we have tried to outline the historical flow of the district. From the period of Harappan culture to the present day, Muzaffarnagar has been full of activities and always in the news.⁹⁶



Shukrataal, Muzaffarnagar.

Image Source: muzaffarnagar.nic.in (<https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/gallery/shukartaal-holy-ganga-gallery/>)

⁹⁶Ibid.

Famous Personalities of Muzaffarnagar

Liaquat Ali Khan



(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liaquat_Ali_Khan)

A British era structure here was once owned by Pakistan's first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, whose extended family lived in Jansath tehsil of Muzaffarnagar, Kehkashan, in a white bungalow with manicured lawns, rows of trees and iron grills located in the Company Bagh area of Muzaffarnagar. The bungalow is presently in the custody of a family from the Purqazi area of Muzaffarnagar, who claim their forefathers bought it from the family of Liaquat Ali Khan.

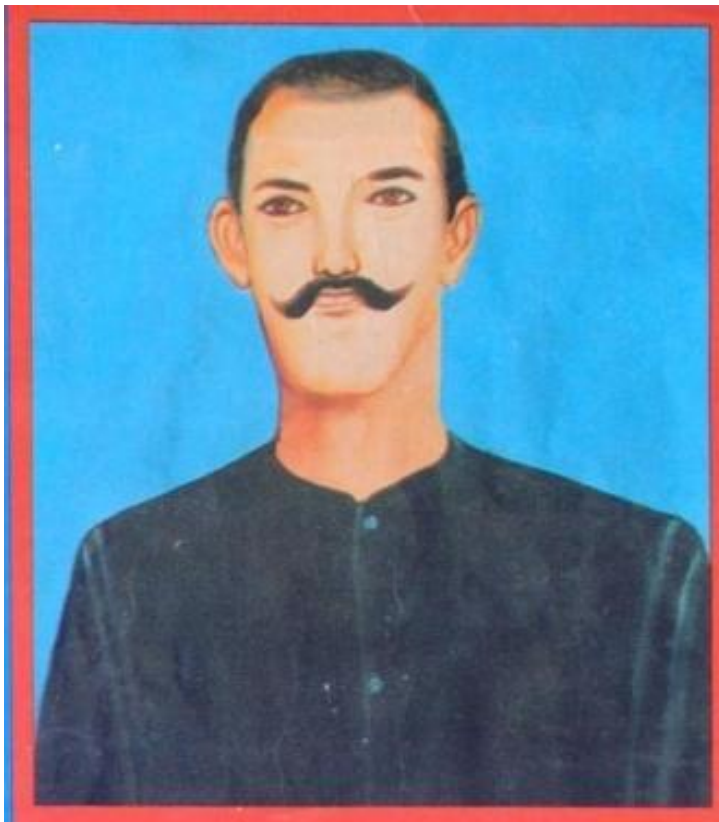
Pt. Sunder Lal



(Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pandit_Sundarlal_Sharma_\(Open\)_University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pandit_Sundarlal_Sharma_(Open)_University))

Pt. Sunder Lal was born in village Baliakheri, Saharanpur district in the state of Uttar Pradesh. He participated in the Indian independence movement and after Indian independence, joined active politics.

Mohar Singh



(Source: https://www.jatland.com/home/Mohar_Singh)

Chaudhary Mohar Singh was a freedom fighter from Shamli in Uttar Pradesh. During the first War for freedom in 1857, a lot of action was enacted in the district of Muzaffarnagar. Chaudhary Mohar Singh of Shamli and the Saiyed-Pathans of Thana Bhawan fought against the British and captured the Tehsil of Shamli.

Lala Har Dayal



(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Har_Dayal)

Lala Har Dayal, (born Oct. 14, 1884, Delhi, India—died March 4, 1939, Philadelphia, U.S.), Indian revolutionary and scholar who was dedicated to the removal of British influence in India.

A Mélange of Cultures

The former administrative units of the Indian subcontinent in the times of the Delhi sultanate, Mughal reign and British Raj were known as *Parganas*. During the reign of 5th Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, Sayied Muzaffar Khan (a minister) received forty villages in jagir in parganas Khatauli and Sarwat along with the title, '*Khan Jahan Shah Jahani*'. He founded the city in the old town of Sarwat or Sarot in 1633 with the lands of Khera and Sujru which was completed by his son, Munawar Lakshar Khan, who in turn named the city as Muzaffarnagar after his father, Muzaffar Khan.

Today, this sugar bowl of India in north western Uttar Pradesh is well connected with national highways and railway networks and is booming as an industrial corridor. In the past, Muzaffarnagar, due to its strategic location, was a centre for many political and economic activities. It is also indicated that this district was a hub of activities during the Mahabharata era due to its proximity with Hastinapur and Kurukshetra.

The land in the doab region of upper Ganga and Yamuna has a diverse population which gets reflected in the languages spoken in the district. The form of Hindi spoken in the district is *Khari-boli*. *Kauravi* is another name assigned to it, probably after the ancient Kaurava rulers. The language gradually evolved from Sanskrit via Prakrit and Apabhramsha, spoken in these parts in the ancient and early medieval period. Urdu and Punjabi are the other two dominant languages of the district.⁹⁷

There are two principal communities, Hindus and Muslims. Apart from the four rigid divisions of castes in Hinduism, i.e.: Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, many independent castes have emerged with sub castes of their own such as the *Jats* and the *Gujars*. The *Tyagis* or *Tagas* were the earliest colonists and claim to be a branch of Brahmans. Later, most of them embraced Islam during the reign of Aurangzeb. They are mainly cultivators.

Jats occupy the dominant position in the district. According to oral accounts (in verses) called *sakha*, Jats had migrated to this district from Gurgaon district of Haryana in the second half of the twelfth century. Their tribal organization and khap panchayats dominate this area till date. The Gujars, who are also an agriculturalist class like the Jats, lay more stress on cattle rearing and claim a Rajput origin. Most of the Muslims in the region are Sunnis, the most prominent of which are the *Saiyids*, commonly known as *Baraha Saiyids*. The history of Baraha Saiyids is intimately connected with the history of Muzaffarnagar. The Tihanpuri Saiyids, Jagneri Saiyids, along with Chhtauri and Kundliwal families, were famous families of undivided Muzaffarnagar. In the later part of the Mughal era, the famous Saiyid brothers became the

⁹⁷Dangli P.Varun, *Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers: Muzaffarnagar*, (Rampur, U.P, Government of Uttar Pradesh,1990), 52

king makers. But after the fall of the Saiyid brothers, Sikhs plundered the area and later the East India Company established its regime. Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists and Christians too inhabit the district and over the years have nurtured the cultural heritage of Muzaffarnagar.⁹⁸

The cultural confluence of Muzaffarnagar has an Indo Islamic flavour which is very much visible in the historical town of Jansath in this district. The area has one of the largest concentrations of Saiyids in India. It also contains several old monuments of Mughal times, including the 'Rang Mahal', the house of the Saiyid brothers. The entrance is called 'Bada Darwaza'. Jansath has several other old monuments like Sheesh Mahal, Moti Mahal, Badi and Choti Haveli and Kili Darwaja. There is a famous mausoleum in Muzaffarnagar known as *Bahu ki Mazar* where the wife of Munawar Lashkar Khan is cremated. Apart from monuments, places of worship like Bhairo ka Mandir, Akshay Vat Vriksha, Ganeshdham, Hanumatdham, Durgadham, and Vahelna are prime pilgrimage centers that are associated with the epics of pauranic times and have associated festivities celebrating the rich folklore of the region.

Festivals: People, beliefs and markers of their belief

Celebrations of festivities are the pulse of the Indian population. There are regional calendars for Hindus across India. People of north and central India follow Vikram Samvat which follows the lunar cycle. According to the calendar there are twelve months beginning with Chaitra. The series of Hindu festivals in the district actually commences with Sitala Astami that falls on the 8th day of the first fortnight of Chaitra when the goddess Sitala is worshipped.

Ram Navami is celebrated on the 9th day of the bright half of that month, commemorating the birth of Rama, and is celebrated with great enthusiasm. Grand processions are taken out in various parts of the city like Nayi Mandi and temples across the city hold minor and major festivities around Ram Navmi.

Hanuman Jayanti is celebrated on Purnima (full moon day) during the Chaitra month, the first month of the Hindu calendar. It falls a few days after Ram Navami and is believed to be the birthday of Lord Hanuman. **Hanumatdham**, is situated in the Shukratal town of Muzaffarnagar district and was constructed in 1987. It is a 72 ft. high idol and was installed by two prominent devotees, Sudarshan Singh Chakra and Inder Kumar. The idol was made by Shri Keshav Ram and was inaugurated by Swami Kalyandev Maharaj. In the front of the idol is an open courtyard with a Yagyashala and on the other side, there is a Katha Manch. Just

⁹⁸Dangli P.Varun, *Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers: Muzaffarnagar*, (Rampur, U.P, Government of Uttar Pradesh,1990), 52-57.

behind the idol are shrines of Lord Rama, Shri Radha Krishna and a hut of Shri Sudarshan Chakra.⁹⁹



Hanumatdham

(Source- <https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/tourist-places/>)

The Vaisakh month is important for Sikhs as a celebration of **Vaisakh Purnima**. Fairs in the gurudwaras are organized. On the 15th day of Jayistha (2nd month of the Hindu calendar) falls **Bargad Amavasya** (Vat-Savitri). On this day, married women fast for the longevity of their husband's life and offer their prayers to the Vat-Vriksha. **Sri Ananteshwar Mahadev Mandir** in Gandhi colony witnesses a large number of women devotees on this day.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹<https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/places-of-interest/>

¹⁰⁰Dangli P.Varun, *Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers: Muzaffarnagar*, (Rampur, U.P, Government of Uttar Pradesh,1990), 61



Shukrataal Ganges Holy Bath (Source- <https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/tourist-places/>)

The Ganga or Jeth Dasahra, a bathing festival, is celebrated on the 10th day of the latter half of the Jayistha month. It is a festival celebrated in honour of the River Ganga. According to the legends, on this day Ganga descended to the earth to rid the souls of the King Bhagirath's forefathers of a curse. The Jayistha Dasahra fair is held at Shamli, Badauli Sayed in Kairana tehsil and at Shukratal, and attracts large congregations.¹⁰¹

Naga panchmi falls on the 5th day of the bright half of Sravana, when the nagas or serpent Gods are worshipped with offerings of milk, flowers and rice. On these occasions, the Ekadash Rudra Shivling temple is flooded with pilgrims who come with immense hope and faith.¹⁰²

Ekadash Rudra Shivling is also of prime importance in the complex of **Bhairo ka Mandir**. As the name suggests, it is a collection of 11 different shivlings. The temple is said to be more than 700 years old. The main *pinda* is of Shiva and the other 10 are devoted to his avatars: Hanuman, Bhairav, Parshuram etc. It is believed that whosoever performs *abhishek* (offering of milk) once, gets the fortune equivalent to 11 times and wins over death too. The month of Sravana (July-August) is very pious for the devotees of the temple. Hindus usually fast every Monday to Lord Shiva and/or every Tuesday to the Goddess Parvati. Maulanas too visit the temple and take vows. There are many Arabic engravings on the walls of the temple. Every year the Gram Samaj organizes Shivratri.

Shivratri is celebrated in honour of Shiva's marriage and falls on the 13th day of the dark half of Phalguna (last month of the Hindu calendar). A fast is observed and the temples of Shiva are decorated. The Gram Samaj puts up the Kawand Sewa Shivir for the devotees. Vishal Bhandar is also put up for the food arrangement of the pilgrims. Over time, small fairs have also come up due to the expansion in the number of devotees.¹⁰³ For the Arya Samajis of the district, Shivratri is a memorable day because Dayanada Sarsawati (the founder of Arya Samaj)

¹⁰¹Dangli P.Varun, *Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers: Muzaffarnagar*, (Rampur, U.P, Government of Uttar Pradesh,1990), 61-62

¹⁰² Varun, 61-62

¹⁰³<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sn4eryjFHVo>

got enlightenment on this night. They celebrate the week preceding this day as **Rishi-Bodha-Saptah** and arrange discourses by learned scholars for seven days.



Ekadash Rudra Shivling
(Source- ghumakkar.com)

Raksha Bandhan is another important festival of Muzaffarnagar. On the 15th day of the first half of the month of Sravana, rakhis (thread symbolising protection) are tied by sisters around the right wrists of their brothers and by the Brahman priests on their patrons.¹⁰⁴

Bhadra or Bhado month of the Hindu calendar corresponds to August/September. On the 8th day of the dark half of Bhadra to commemorate the birth anniversary of Lord Krishna, **Janamashtmi** is celebrated.

In the same month **Anant Chaturdasi**, which falls on the 14th day of the later half of Bhadra, is celebrated. It is a day to worship Vishnu in his eternal form. It coincides with the 10 day festival of Ganesh Chaturthi and falls on the concluding day. **Ganeshdham** features a 35 ft. high statue of Lord Ganesha. With Hanumatdham at the back, it is located near Sukhdeva Teela. River Tripatha flows on one side and Vat Vriksha on the other side.¹⁰⁵ Anant Chaturdasi

¹⁰⁴Varun, 61

¹⁰⁵<https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/places-of-interest/>

is an important day in the religious festivities of Jains too. Digamabar Jains observe Paryushana, commonly known as **Dashlakshana Parva**, during the last ten days of Bhadra. Anant Chaturdashi is the last day of Paryushana. On this day, Kshamavani Jains ask for forgiveness for mistakes they have made intentionally or otherwise.



Ganeshdham

(Source- <https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/tourist-places/>)

The 30th day of Ashvina is the **Pitra Visarjan Amavasya** which is devoted to the memory of the deceased kinsmen.¹⁰⁶ In the month of Ashvina, **Navratri** is celebrated. During Navratri, Durga is worshipped for 9 days continuously in the bright half of the Ashvina. The 9th day of this is known as Durga-Navmi. The following day is Dasahra or Vijay Dasami, dedicated to the worship of Goddess Vijaya, also commemorating the victory of Ram over Ravana. Ramlila celebrations are held at different places in the district. 4 major fairs associated with Ramlila

¹⁰⁶Varun, 61-62

are set up in the district. **Durga dham** is a popular site for worshippers of Goddess Durga. A 51 ft. statue stands next to lord Shiva. There is also a natural cave at the site. The dham attracts many worshippers during festivals like Navratri.¹⁰⁷

The fourth day of the first half of the Kartik is called **Karwa Chauth** when married women keep a fast for the well-being of their husbands. **Dipavali** or Diwali falls on the last day of the dark half of Kartik. Festivities start two days earlier with **Dhanteras**, celebrated as the birthday of Dhanwantari, the divine physician. On the main day of the festival every Hindu house is illuminated with diyas and electric lights and the goddess Lakshmi is worshipped. **Govardhan Pooja** is performed on the next day after Diwali when women worship the replica of Govardhan Mountain (prepared with cowdung). On the 2nd day of the bright fortnight of Kartika, **Chitragupta-puja or Dwait Pooja** is performed to pay symbolic homage to Chitragupta, said to be endowed with celestial powers for keeping accounts, and claimed by the Kayastha community as their patron deity. The same day, **Bhai Dooj** is also celebrated when women put the roli mark on the forehead of their brothers. The 11th day of this fortnight of the same month is known as **Dev-Uthan Ekadasi**, considered auspicious for fixing marriages and other social functions which remain suspended for the preceding four months.

Kartik Purnima is a Hindu, Sikh, and Jain festival which is celebrated on the full moon day or the 15th lunar day of 'Kartik' (November-December). Kartik month is considered to be the most sacred among all the twelve months of the year. It is also known as **Dev Diwali** or **Tripurari Purnima** as it is believed that Shiva in his form of Tripurantaka killed Tripusara on this day. When Kartik Purnima falls in the Krittika Nakshatra, it is known as Maha Karti, which has more significance. According to Hindu legend, it is believed that on this day, Gods descended to Earth in the holy rivers. Hence, by taking holy dip in sacred rivers, devotees seek blessings. **The Kartiki Purnima fair at Shukratal**, in Jansath tehsil, is the biggest Hindu bathing fair of the district and attracts lakhs of pilgrims and saints on the banks of the Ganga. Guru Nanak Jayanti is also celebrated on the same day of Kartik Purnima as it marks the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev.

In the town of **Shukratal/Sukteerth** in the Muzaffarnagar district, the site of pilgrimage for Hindus is said to have existed for about 5000 years. It is 13 km from Morna bus station in Jansath tehsil. It is believed to be the site where Parikshit (the grandson of Arjun) heard the sermon of Srimad Bhagwat delivered by Shuk Deva. It is also the venue of a big fair held annually on Kartik Purnima.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷<https://www.nativeplanet.com/muzaffarnagar/attractions/durga-dham/>

¹⁰⁸<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/destinations/shukratal-with-its-ancient-attractions-is-a-tourists-dream-come-true/as65624178.cms>

Varun, 59 and 272

In the month of Agradhayana, **Kaalbhairav Jayanti** is celebrated. **Bhairon ka mandir** is also one of the prominent temples in the district. Every year **Bhairav Kaal Ashtami Mahotsav** is celebrated with great pomp and show. Kaal Ashtami is held on every eighth day of 'Krishna Paksha' of the month. Kaal bhairav Jayanti is celebrated at the end of the year. A procession of Batuk Bhairav Baba is taken out during the Mahotsav. Batuk Bhairav is worshipped as an avatar of Lord Shiva. According to popular myths, it is believed that once there was an argument between the male Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh as to who was the most supreme of all. When Shiva claimed to be superior, Vishnu backed out but Brahma challenged him. The argument heated up and it got to a point when sages and scholars had to intervene but Brahma did not back down. An enraged Shiva took the form of Bhairav and cut off the 5th head of Brahma. As he cut off Brahma's head with his nail, the skull was stuck and from then it is known as Brahma Kalpa. This depiction is found in all Brahma temples in India. It is believed that he is kind and easily bestows his devotees with wealth and prosperity.

Kaal Bhairav's *vahan* is a black dog. Therefore, black dogs are valued on the kaal ashtmi. Also, every Shakti peeth is guarded by Lord Kaal Bhairav aka Bhatuk Bhairav. The prime time to pray to Kaal Bhairav is in the Rahu Kaal, i.e from 4:30 p.m to 6:00 p.m. Bhairav Ashtami Mahotsav holds elaborate rituals including Ganesh puja, Vedi pujan, Dhawajrohan, Sundarkand path, hawan, rudrabhishek ratri, purnahuti aarti and lastly bhog prasad. Devotees from Jain and Buddhist communities also worship god Bhairon.¹⁰⁹

Lohri is celebrated with organized fairs in the month of Pausa by the Sikhs. The **Sakat Chauth** falls on the 4th day of the dark half of Magha, when the male children cut out the figure of a goat made of til and their mothers keep a fast. **Makar Sankranti** marks the transit of the sun from Dhanu (Sagittarius) to Makara (Capricorn) and is celebrated as a bathing festival. **Vasant Panchami** which falls on the 5th day of the later fortnight of Maga, is devoted to the worship of Saraswati, the goddess of learning.

Holi is the concluding festival of the Vikram era, celebrated on the last day of Phalgun. Bonfires are lit at crossroads at a fixed time to commemorate the annihilation of all ill-will, malice and evil forces of the previous year, represented by the demon god's sister Holika. Barley is roasted in the fire as offerings to the gods. It is a festival of colours. People rub coloured powder on each other in a frolicsome mood. People visit their relatives and distribute sweets. The rural inhabitants sing *phag* with dholaks, the folk song of the season, before and after the day of the festival.¹¹⁰

In Meerut, the **Nauchandi Mela** or fair is held for about two weeks after Holi every year and is visited by lakhs of people. After the Nauchandi Mela gets over in Meerut in March-April, the fair shifts to Muzaffarnagar with a new name, **Numaish**. During the British rule, a

¹⁰⁹<https://www.nativeplanet.com/muzaffarnagar/attractions/bhairon-ka-mandir/>
<https://www.amarujala.com/uttar-pradesh/muzaffarnagar/bhairav-baba-s-grand-procession-was-taken-out-muzaffarnagar-news-mrt454119978>

¹¹⁰Varun, 59 and 61

‘numaish’ of horses (display of horses) begun in Muzaffarnagar. As time passed, this ‘numaish’ took the form of a trade fair where several amusement activities, from circus to puppet shows and swings to a variety of indigenous cuisine, became an integral part of the event. Numaish is not a religious festival and has been given a new name and identity by the government today as **Jila Krishi Evam Audyogik Pradarshini** but the local folk still call it **Numaish**.¹¹¹

Akshya Vat Vriksha, also known as Akshya Vat, is as old as the town of Shukratal and it is believed that Sage Shuk Deva narrated the Shrimad Bhagwat Gita to Maharaj Parikshit, the grandson of the great archer Arjun of the greatest epic Mahabharata, beneath it. According to the legend, the tree doesn’t shed leaves throughout the year and thus it has been given a special name, the ‘Tree of Undying Character’. This holy tree is visited by many devotees who tie a red thread around the tree to fulfill their wishes.

The myth that is popular among the masses relates that once Maharaj Parikshit went for a hunt to the jungle. He became exhausted and was looking for water desperately. He came across Shamit Muni’s ashram and asked for water. Shamit Muni was deep in meditation. In agitation the king threw a dead snake over his neck. However, this tactic too failed to awaken him. But the muni’s son got to know about the mischief of the king and in pain he cursed that whosoever did this to his father would die of a snake bite within a week. When Maharaj Parikshit got to know about the curse, he abandoned his royal palace and went to Shukratal and there he started chanting Lord Krishna’s name. Then appeared Shuk Deva muni, and narrated Shrimad Bhagwat Gita to him under the same Akshaya Vat Vriksha which is visited by devotees today. He explained how death cannot be escaped and that it is futile to fear it. **Every year Bhagwat Katha is organized at the Akshya Vat Vriksha in the town.** The katha at the Shuk Deva ashram continues for a week with holy rituals and yajna. Pilgrims from all over the world come here to seek forgiveness and peace. There is a Shuk Deva temple near the tree where majestic idols of sage Shuk Deva and King Parikshit have been placed.¹¹²

¹¹¹<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/meerut/3-yrs-after-13-riots-Numaish-to-be-held-in-Muzaffarnagar/articleshow/53863569.cms>

¹¹²<https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/places-of-interest/>
<https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/tourist-place/akshya-vat/>



Akshya Vat Vriksha

(Source- <https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/tourist-places/>)

Besides the popular form of Hinduism, some people have faith in their favourite saints. **Piyara ji** is a saint worshipped by Gujars whose principal shrine is in Ramdewa (a village in Saharanpar tehsil). The fair held in his honour falls on the 6th day of the dark fortnight of Chaitra. The saint's followers wear black necklaces at the time of the worship.

Goga Pir or Zahir pir is another popular deity worshipped by both Hindus and Muslims. Fairs are held in the month of Sravana and Bhadra. The **Chhariyo ka Mela** is celebrated in the memory of the saint Goga Pir, in all the tehsils except Budhana and is attended in large numbers.

Baba Kalu is yet another local saint held in great reverence particularly by Chamar, Kahar and the Kumhar communities.¹¹³

Another principal religion of the district is Islam. In the Islamic calendar there are twelve months, like Muharram following Safar, Rabi al awar (Rabi I), Rabi II, Jumada I, Jumada II, Rajan, Sha'ban, Ramadan, Shawwal, Zul-Qi'dah and lastly Zul-al-Hijjah.

Id ul zuha (Bakr-id) is one of the important Muslim festivals celebrated in the district, in the month of Zulhijja to commemorate the occasion when Ibrahim resolved to treat his son as an offering to mark the highest form of sacrificial spirit which was blessed by God the merciful

¹¹³Varun, 59

with no injury to Ismail but with sheep's sanctification of the alter instead. The Muslims say their namaz in idgahs and sacrifice sheep and goats.

The first ten days of the month of Muharram is mourned by the Shias devoted to perpetuate the martyrdom of Imam Husain, the grandson of the prophet of Islam and his companions on the battle field of Karbala. On Ashra, the last of these ten days which is the most important as Imam Husain was killed on that day, tazias are taken out for burial at Karbala. Chelhum, on the 20th of Safar, falling on the 40th day of Ashra, usually marks the end of the mourning.

On the 12th of the month of rabi-al-awwal falls **Barawafat**, which marks the birthday of Prophet Muhammad, when alms are distributed and discourses of his life and mission are held.

On the 14th day of Shaban, **Sab-e-barat** is celebrated, which marks the birth of the 12th Imam of the Shias. **Ramadan** is the month of fasting. The end of Ramadan is celebrated as **Id-ul-fitr** by offering namaz in idgahs and mosques and exchanging gifts and greetings. A typical feature of this festival is the consumption of vermicelli or sewain.

Many Muslims put faith in pirs (Muslim saints). Fairs held in the district are generally urs celebration. On the 5th day of Shawal, '**Urs Garib**' fair is celebrated at village Shoron in Budhana tehsil. Others are the urs of **Khwaja Saheb** in the months of November-December held at Kairana, **Baba Chand Khan ki Roshni** urs on Ramadan in Muzaffarnagar tehsil, **Mela Nasir Ali** on the 2nd Friday of Jayistha at Jansath, **Mela Peer** on Jayistha at Khand Rawale and the urs of Mastan Shah in the month of Shawal at Khera Mastan in Budhana tehsil. The Muharram fairs are held at Kandhla in Budhana Tehsil and at Khanjahanpur, 3km away from Muzaffarnagar bus station.¹¹⁴

Jains form one of the most important classes of the mercantile community and are generally known as Sarwagis. **Vahelna** is an important pilgrimage site for Jains. This site has a mosque, a Shiva temple and a Jain temple sharing a common wall. It is also known as **Shri 1008 Parshwanath Digambar Jain Atisheya Chetra** and has an idol of Lord Parshwanath. A newly built 31 ft. monolith statue of Lord Parshwanath has been installed in the Jain Mandir. Jains celebrate the birth and nirvana anniversaries of the last tirthankara, Mahavira, the former on the 13th day of the bright half of Chaitra and the latter on Dipavali day. **Ashtanhika Parv** is celebrated for eight days three times a year in the month of Kartik, Phalgun and Ashad. It is celebrated from the eighth day of Shukla Paksh till Purnima/Guru Purnima every year. Their important fair '**Jain Uchacho**' is dedicated to lord Mahavira, is held at Vahelna in Muzaffarnagar tehsil, in the month of Bhadra when they assemble for prayers and religious rites.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴Varun, 63

¹¹⁵<https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/tourist-place/vehlna/>
Varun, 64



Vahelna

(Source- <https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/tourist-places/>)

Religion is a dominant aspect for the people of Muzaffarnagar district. It paints its cultural vibrance and makes it an attractive pilgrim tourist destination. All festivals of all religions are celebrated with equal enthusiasm and through these festivals people preserve their rich culture and faith and pass it on to the generations ahead.

Arts and Crafts

Paper Cluster

The paper cluster of Muzaffarnagar has around 29 units. According to a manual published by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), the entire paper cluster is geographically divided into three areas: Bhopa Road, Jansath Road and Shamli in Muzaffarnagar district.¹¹⁶

In terms of raw material usage, the mills can be broadly put in two categories – waste paper based and agro-waste based. Similarly, for finished products too, though the bulk of the mills produce only craft paper, a few of them have started producing writing paper.¹¹⁷ Additionally, some units also produce printing paper, filter paper, gray board, poster paper and hard tissue paper.

Paper is a natural product, manufactured from a natural and renewable raw material: wood. Wood is the primary raw material for this industry. It is made from cellulose fibres that are bound together by lignin. The manual notes that ‘the paper industry in Muzaffarnagar cluster uses either the waste paper or agro residue as a source of lignin needed for the paper manufacturing process. Recovered paper has become as important a source of new paper as wood-recovered paper now accounts for more than half of the fibres used in the production of paper. However, fibre cannot be usefully recycled endlessly; so there is an ongoing need to feed the supply of recovered fibre with virgin fibre in the form of agri residue.’¹¹⁸



Image Source: The Indian Express (<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/the-economy-of-fear/>)

¹¹⁶ “Manual on Energy Conservation Measures in Paper Cluster. Muzaffarnagar.” *Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power, Government of India.*

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Wood Carving

Saharanpur is popular for its wood carving artisans. An important district for the manufacturing of these wooden products, it is also known as '**Sheesham Wood Village.**'¹¹⁹

Areas in Muzaffarnagar also have craftsmen working in the field of wood carving and woodwork. **Jalalabad**, a town and nagar panchayat in Shamli district, which was carved out from Muzaffarnagar on 28 September 2011, is internationally famous for its wood carving cottage industry.¹²⁰

This craft is around four hundred years old. The finished goods are known for their intricate patterns, which is why they are not just trading well domestically, but internationally as well. The wood carving industry has supported the livelihoods of many.¹²¹



Image Source: One District One Product, Government of Uttar Pradesh
(<http://odopup.in/images/saharnpur.jpg>)

¹¹⁹ “The Hub of Wood Industry: Saharanpur,” *Grotal*, accessed October 09, 2020.

¹²⁰ Wikipedia

¹²¹ “Saharanpur,” *One District One Product, Government of Uttar Pradesh*, accessed October 09, 2020.



Image Source: One District One Product, Government of Uttar Pradesh (<http://odopup.in/images/saharnpur1.jpg>)



Image Source: One District One Product, Government of Uttar Pradesh (<http://odopup.in/images/saharnpur4.jpg>)

The origins of this craft are debated. According to Devyani Nighoskar's report, "It was reportedly Bahul Lodi who settled some Afghani artisans at the outskirts of Saharanpur in the 15th century. Today, this area makes up for not just *Khata Kheri* but also Lakdi Bazaar where some of the finished items like exquisitely carved furniture, toys, objects such as boxes, lamps and lanterns are sold. But traces of Saharanpur wooden work can be found everywhere – right from Rajasthan's beautiful heritage doors to Bahrain's king's furniture, and to wooden toys manufactured by brands, and furniture showrooms across the world."¹²²

This industry does not face any threats, due to the constant demand for the products. However, the workers are required to put in too many hours: leading to a lot of strain on their

¹²² Nighoskar, Devyani. "In Saharanpur, art of woodwork thrives as artisans embrace international designs, digital business methods." *Firstpost*, January 04, 2019.

necks and backs. Nighoskar also notes how most of them work without safety equipment, which leads the sawdust to enter their eyes or lungs, ultimately leading to major health concerns.¹²³



'Khata Kheri has many hardware shops that sell tools required for woodcarving.'

Caption and Image Source: Firstpost (https://www.firstpost.com/wp-content/uploads/large_file_plugin/2018/12/1545994747_saharanpur-1.jpg)



'Most customers bring a photograph of the design they like and the kaarigars imitate it.'

Caption and Image Source: Firstpost (https://www.firstpost.com/wp-content/uploads/large_file_plugin/2018/12/1545995693_saharanpur-4.jpg)

¹²³ Ibid.

Folklore and Places of Interest

Vahelna Jain Temple

Vahelna, a lesser known destination in Muzaffarnagar, holds deep significance as a pilgrimage site for Jains. It has a mosque, a temple dedicated to Shiva, and a Jain temple. All three of these share a common wall, a mark of rich secularism. The Vahelna Jain Temple, specifically, is the home of an old idol of Lord Parshwanath. It also has a 57 feet high manasthamb, and a 31 feet monolith statue of the Lord (which was built and installed in the temple).¹²⁴

Another name of the temple is Shri 1008 Digambar Jain Mandir Atishay Kshetra. Inside the temple, there are several paintings and sculptures which depict the scriptural tales. Additionally, there is a small garden called *Tirthankar Vatika* where one can find and admire 24 trees representing the 24 Tirthankars of Jainism.¹²⁵



The statue of Moolnayak Parshvnath.

Image Source: muzaffarnagar.nic.in (<https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/gallery/vahelna-jain-temple-gallery/>)

¹²⁴ “Vahelna - Jain Temple,” Official website of Muzaffarnagar, Government of India, accessed October 22, 2020.

¹²⁵ Sangal, Shiv. “You Must Know About This Less Known Cultural Gem Of Muzaffarnagar (India).” Goodreads.



Image Source: Goodreads (https://www.goodreads.com/author_blog_posts/17580599-you-must-know-about-this-less-known-cultural-gem-of-muzaffarnagar-india)



The Shiv Mandir inside the Jain Temple Complex.

Image Source: muzaffarnagar.nic.in (<https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/gallery/vahelna-jain-temple-gallery/>)



Inside the Hindu temple.

Image Source: Goodreads (https://www.goodreads.com/author_blog_posts/17580599-you-must-know-about-this-less-known-cultural-gem-of-muzaffarnagar-india)



The Mosque inside the Jain Temple Complex.

Image Source: muzaffarnagar.nic.in (<https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/gallery/vahelna-jain-temple-gallery/>)



Lawns And Greenery - Jain Temple Complex

Image Source: muzaffarnagar.nic.in (<https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/gallery/vahelna-jain-temple-gallery/>)



The statue of Moolnayak Parshvnath inside the Temple.

Image Source: muzaffarnagar.nic.in (<https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/gallery/vahelna-jain-temple-gallery/>)

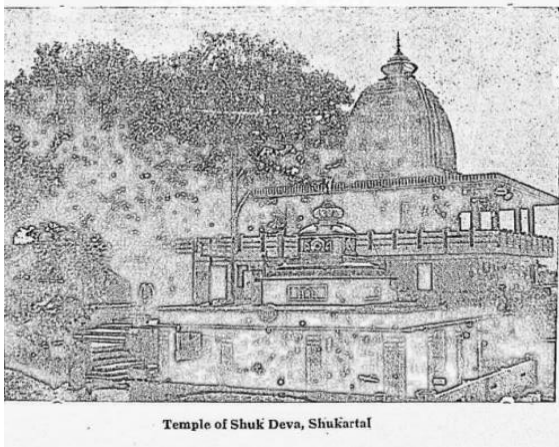
Shukratal Dham

The pilgrimage location of Shukratal is a part of the district of Muzaffarnagar. Shukratal is specifically perceived through the lens of religion due to its connections with the period of the Mahabharata. A plethora of devotees visit, and a part of the routine involves taking a bath in the 'holy' river Ganges to practice their faith.¹²⁶ Additionally, a [purportedly] 5100 old banyan tree (with a height of 150 feet) named Akshay Vat is also a part of the premises and is famous for a number of reasons.¹²⁷



Shukratal Dham, Muzaffarnagar.

Image Source: articalbook.com (<https://www.articalbook.com/history-of-shukratal-dham/>)



Temple at shukratal. Image Source: District Gazetteer, page 285.

(<https://cdn.s3waas.gov.in/s3335f5352088d7d9bf74191e006d8e24c/uploads/2019/11/2019111843.pdf>)

¹²⁶ Hussain. "History of Shukratal Dham located in Muzaffarnagar." *ArticalBook*, March 28, 2020.

¹²⁷ "Akshay Vat - Shukartaal," Official website of Muzaffarnagar, Government of India, accessed October 22, 2020.

The Akshay Vat tree has ancient roots, involving a rich history of devotee worship and reverence. It is a site for several events, as well, like the recitation of stories from texts such as the Bhagwat Gita. Historically, during the ancient period, the shrine and river Ganges were in close proximity with one another; however, in the present day, the course of the river has shifted away bit by bit. It requires one to climb many stairs to reach the temple premises.¹²⁸

In relation to the period of the Mahbharata, mythology tells us the story of King Parikshit of Hastinapur.¹²⁹ The famous Akshay Vat tree witnessed the gathering of 88,000 sages and Sukhdev Maharaj to narrate the Bhagwat Katha to the King, in order for him to achieve salvation. Due to a mistake made by the King unintentionally, he was cursed to die by a snakebite. Sukhdev Muni, and other saints, recited the story of Bhagwat Gita to free him from the curse. Due to this very instance, the tree is worshipped till today, with believers tying threads under the tree to have their wishes fulfilled. It is seen as a sacred tree, having deep spiritual meaning for a worshipper. The life of the tree is thriving, with a belief that even fallen leaves don't dry up and remain evergreen. Hence, it has been given the title of 'The Tree of Undying Character'.¹³⁰



A close up view of the Akshay Vat.

Image Source: muzaffarnagar.nic.in (<https://muzaffarnagar.nic.in/gallery/akshay-vat-gallery/>)

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ “Akshay Vat - Shukartaal,” Official website of Muzaffarnagar, Government of India, accessed October 22, 2020.

Legend of Sant Baba Gopal Giri

With several legends acting as a part of popular imagination, one shines through when it comes to devotional and religious aspects. The district of Muzaffarnagar houses a village known as Kharad; there are two famous temples worshipping the Hindu goddesses Shakubari Devi and Maa Sitla Devi.¹³¹

In another part of this village, the 'Forest', a legend surrounding Sant Baba Gopal Giri continues to be popularized.¹³² The sage is believed to have successfully worshipped a number of deities, and as a result was rewarded with a secret formula to come back to life after passing away. Many also believe that the forest area is replenished with such medicines, having the miraculous properties to bring a dead individual back to life (owing to the contributions of Baba Giri).

The legend of Baba Giri is connected to goddess Shakumbri Devi. The former once had a dream that the goddess wished to reside in the forest, after which the Baba gathered donations from the villagers, and constructed a temple for her.¹³³ Once the temple was fully built, Shakumbri Devi began to treat it as her home, and only then did Baba Gopal Giri face his demise.



Photograph By: Pradeep Bansal 22.03.2006

Shakumbri Devi Temple.

Image Source: Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shakumbhri_Devi#/media/File:Sdevi.JPG)

¹³¹ “Muzaffarnagar District,” *Familypedia*, accessed September 25, 2020.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.



The idol of goddess Shakumbri inside the temple chambers.

Image Source: Hindu Devotional Blog (<https://www.hindudevotionalblog.com/2016/03/shakumbhari-devi-temple-saharanpur.html>)

Instances of Human Sacrifice

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the custom of offering a first born child to the river Ganges was a common activity. The modern instances of human sacrifice¹³⁴ among the Khandhs of Bengal and the Mers of Rajputana are notorious. Some of the Gonds of Sarguja used to offer human sacrifice to Burha Deo, and still go through a form of doing so.

There is an instance quoted among the Tiyars, a class of boatmen in Benares: a person named Tonuram sacrificed four men in the hope of recovering the treasures of seven rajas; another man was killed to propitiate a *rakshasa* who guarded a treasure supposed to be concealed in a house where the deed was committed.

There seems reason to suspect that even in the present day such sacrifices are occasionally performed at remote shrines of the goddesses of Kali or Durga Devi. Near Vishakapatnam, at

¹³⁴Crooke, William. *The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India: Volume II*. Archibald Constable & Co., 1896: pages 169-173.

the King's installation in 1861, he is said to have sacrificed a girl to Durga. Similar cases¹³⁵ of such a sacrifice with the intent of recovering a hidden treasure occurred in Berar; a second connected with witchcraft at Muzaffarnagar.

Besides the religious form of human sacrifice in honour of deities, there are forms of the rite which depend on the mystic power attributed to human flesh and blood in various charms and black magic. In connection with human flesh¹³⁶, a curious story is told of a man who went to bathe in the Ganges, and met one of the abominable *faqirs* known as *aghorpanthis*, who carried with them fragments of a human corpse. He saw the *faqir* cut off and eat a piece of the flesh of a corpse, and he then offered him a piece, saying that if he ate it he would become enormously rich. He refused the ghastly food, and the *faqir* then threw a piece at him which stuck to his head, forming a permanent lump.

The same mysterious power is attributed to human blood, as well. The blood of the *jinn* has special powers of its own. Bathing in human blood has been regarded as a powerful remedy for disease. In the German folktales, for example, bathing in the blood of innocent maidens is a cure for leprosy.

Similar kinds of beliefs largely prevail in India. In 1870, a Muslim butcher losing his child was told by a Hindu conjuror that if he washed his wife in the blood of a boy, his next infant would be healthy. To ensure this result, a child was murdered. A similar case occurred in Muzaffarnagar, where a child was killed and the blood drunk by a barren woman. In another instance in Muzaffarnagar, a childless Jat woman was told that she would attain her desire if she bathed in water mixed with the blood of a Brahman child.¹³⁷

This practice and its connection with witchcraft persists even in the twenty-first century, as recent as in April, 2020. Considered as a case of human sacrifice, a 30 year old man was arrested in Kakrauli police station in Muzaffarnagar for allegedly killing his two year old daughter. He did so after receiving advice from his friend; both were arrested.¹³⁸ Wajid (the father) and Irfaan (the friend) worked as labourers at a brick kiln in Khaikheda, with their families.

During the interrogation, Wajid stated two reasons as to why he killed his daughter.¹³⁹ First, he was facing dispute issues in his family for months. After talking to Irfaan, who is believed to be interested in witchcraft, about it, Wajid was persuaded to sacrifice the life of his

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ HT Correspondent. "Human Sacrifice: Man kills two-year-old daughter in Muzaffarnagar." *Hindustan Times*, April 21, 2020.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

daughter in order to establish peace in his family. The second reason was that the child reminded him of his past girlfriend. The police noted how he kept changing his statements, leading them to believe he might have killed her out of frustration. Nonetheless, the FIR registered against Wajid and Irfaan was for the charge of murder.¹⁴⁰

These instances of human sacrifices and legends have not been proved and remain a mysterious aspect with multiple stories from the district. The research team did not find credible sources to back this legend of human sacrifices during the research phase.

Saint Piyara Ji

The Muzaffarnagar Gazetteer (1903) notes how besides the general beliefs which were common to almost all Hindus, the lower classes had their favourite saints to whom their active devotion was mainly made.¹⁴¹ One of them is Piyara Ji, whose temple is located at Ramdewa. His grandfather, Ramji Padarath Badfarosh, was born in 1488 A.D., at Durganpur, in Pargana Budhana, and he disappeared immediately after Piyara's birth. Six days afterwards he returned.

As he grew up he was given the task of watching his father's cattle, and one day allowed them to stray into the field of a Rajput (which damaged a lot of corn). The person complained, but when the authorities came to make a local inquiry, the field was found intact, and the people declared that a miracle had been performed. As it is narrated, "The youth had sense enough to make the most of this incident and soon gathered around him a band of disciples. His reputation increased and he married into the wealthy family of Bhawani Das Badfarosh, of Khudi-Shikarpur. The fruit of his union was Ragonath, who married into a family at Soron and had a son, Piyara Ji."¹⁴²

Word about Piyara Ji reached Garhwal, and the Raja of Srinagar gave him five villages. About this time a quarrel broke out between the Brahmans and Gujars of Sadarpur, and the latter murdered the priest, but in revenge the ghosts of the murdered men tormented the Gujars, who prayed for the assistance of Piyara Ji. He granted their request and declared that Sadarpur belonged to him in a former birth. Piyara Ji claimed the village and changed its name to Andeva, of which Ramdewa is the modern rendering.¹⁴³ He died there and was buried in the village. The saint's followers are Vaishnavas, and wear black necklaces.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Nevill, H. R. *Muzaffarnagar: A Gazetteer, Being Volume III of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*. Government Press, 1903: pages 103-105.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

Shrine of Pulamdeh Devi

There is a Gujar shrine at Bilaspur (to the south-east of Lakhnauti), which is visited by a large number of devotees and pilgrims during the month of Asarh. Mr. Williams gives the following account of its origin in the Muzaffarnagar Gazetteer: "About three hundred years ago, Amrao Gujar, a zamindar of Bilaspur, suddenly took to shaking his head and exclaiming, 'I am Devi Pulamdeh. Erect a temple to me. Rati Brahman will be my priest; he and his descendants are to receive all offerings made to me.' The inspired voice was obeyed without question. About half a century ago, Sahib Mall, a pious Mahajan of Bidauli, built a well near the temple for the convenience of worshippers."¹⁴⁵

Saint Goga Pir

Goga Pir continues to be worshipped throughout the upper Doab region by Hindus and Muslims alike. To honour him, gatherings are held at the Goga-Kathal fair in Guru Ram Rai's Thakurdwara in Dehra, the Guguhai fair at Manikmau (near Saharanpur), and the Suraj Kund in Meerut.¹⁴⁶ These assemblies, known as *chhariyan*, occur on the ninth day of the new moon of Bhadon, when the standards are uplifted and raised for around two days. The tomb of Saint Goga Pir is two hundred miles to the south west of Hisaar.¹⁴⁷ His other names are Zahir Pir and Zahir Diwan (in Meerut).

¹⁴⁵ Nevill, H. R. *Muzaffarnagar: A Gazetteer, Being Volume III of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*. Government Press, 1903: page 105.

¹⁴⁶ Nevill, H. R. *Muzaffarnagar: A Gazetteer, Being Volume III of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*. Government Press, 1903: pages 105-106.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

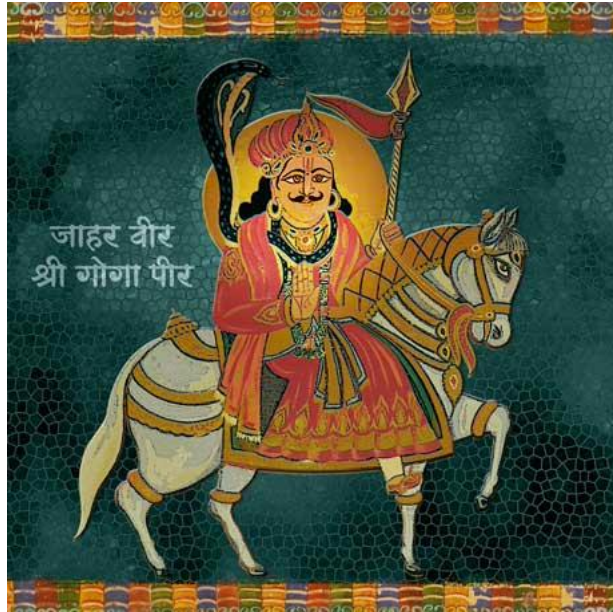


Image Source: De Kulture (<https://www.dekulture.com/index.php?route=jahar-veer-shri-goga-pir>)

According to local tradition recounted in the Gazetteer, Goga was the son of Vacha (a Chauhan Rajput king); some also say he might have been the son of Jewar (whose wife provided him with a son after receiving blessings from Gorakhnath).¹⁴⁸ There are various versions of his story: in one of them, he was the king of Bikaner. It is believed that he had a fight with his brothers about property rights and killed two of them; after realizing his mistake and grieving for their loss, he wished for the earth to open and swallow him whole. However, a voice spoke from heaven and declared that he would not be buried alive until and unless he repeated the Muslim faith confessions. He apparently completed the task, after which the planet opened up and he jumped into the chasm.¹⁴⁹

Another legend associates Goga as being the opponent against his relative Prithviraj of Delhi.¹⁵⁰ The Gazetteer explains this legend, "He conquered all these with the aid of Ratan Haji, who gave Goga a javelin which shot hither and thither through the air of itself and destroyed all obstacles. Prithiraj was killed in the fray, and in remorse for his crime Goga buried himself alive. Goga's horse is celebrated under the name Javadia. It is said that the father of Goga received two grains of barley from his guardian deity, one of which he gave to his wife, who bore him Goga, and another to his mare, who brought forth the steed Javadia. Some say the barley-corns were given by Goga to his own wife and stud-horse."¹⁵¹

An intriguing comment from H. M. Elliot states that Goga "must have contended with the earlier Ghaznavid monarchs, for several favourite ballads relate how he fell with his forty-five

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

sons and sixty nephews opposing the great Mahmud on the banks of the Ghara.”¹⁵² Evidence collected by Cunningham informs the reader of many shrines dedicated to Goga in the lower Himalayas of Punjab. In that region, he is believed to be the chief of Ghazni.¹⁵³

In Charthawal, Muzaffarnagar, many fairs are held every year. One of these is known as the fair of Chhariyan, which takes place during the month of Bhadra. Chhariyan is devoted to Saint Goga Pir, and is attended by about five thousand people.¹⁵⁴ In Bijnor as well, there is a tradition related to Goga Pir. The Hindu and Muslim residents of qasbahs came together annually to celebrate his legacy. He is also known as Zahir Pir or Zahir Diwan, and this celebration extended to nearby areas of Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Saharanpur, and Bidauli. A fair known as ‘Chhair Zahir Diwan’ attracted around 250 people in Bijnor, on the ninth day of Bhadra (or, the beginning of September).¹⁵⁵

Saint Baba Kalu

Baba Kalu is another of the local saints held in great reverence. The origin of the worship of this saint has been described by Mr. Williams:

“The fairies were wafting Solomon through the air upon his throne. The monarch, looking down, chanced to see a young Kahar girl heaping up manure on a dunghill. The sight disgusted him so much that he affected to stop his nose and exclaimed, ‘Who in the world would marry such a dirty ugly little girl.’ Soon after, however, desiring to take a bath, he had his throne laid down by the edge of a stream. He undressed and inadvertently left his magic ring near his clothes on the bank. Scarcely had he plunged in than a fish, jumping out of the water, swallowed the talisman. The fairies at once flew away with the throne, for the charm of the ring was broken. The king remained shivering behind in great distress. He eventually made a virtue of necessity and took refuge in an adjacent village, where he was hospitably received in the house of the very girl he had seen gathering dung. One day the maiden's mother remarked to her husband, ‘You should marry our daughter to a man like our guest.’ This she repeated thrice. The mystical number worked, and Solomon said, ‘Marry her to me, for you have spoken three times.’”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Varun, Dangli Prasad. *Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers: Muzaffarnagar*. Government Press, Rampur, 1990: page 275.

¹⁵⁵ Robb, Megan Eaton. *Print and the Urdu Public: Muslims, Newspapers, and Urban Life in Colonial India*. Oxford University Press, 2020: page 86.

¹⁵⁶ Nevill, H. R. *Muzaffarnagar: A Gazetteer, Being Volume III of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*. Government Press, 1903: pages 106-108.

After this, they got married to each other and lived in a humble abode. After some time, the girl's fathers went with a net to the river, and caught many items (the fish who had swallowed the magic ring was one of them). He gave it to his daughter, who discovered it and then passed it to her husband, thinking only he was worthy of such a beautiful thing.¹⁵⁷

When the king placed the ring on his finger, he once again went back to his original form and disappeared. His wife then wept uncontrollably, as she was also pregnant. She gave birth to Baba Kalu. He is represented by a stick decorated with peacock's feathers.¹⁵⁸ Several offerings are made to him. He is also associated with superstitions, as well as ghost and demon worship.

Williams further comments, "They prove Hinduism proper to be a mere name. Brahmanism is something quite above the comprehension of the masses, whose degraded religious condition presents only one hopeful aspect. The greatest obstacle to the propagation of a true faith is a creed which, though false, still seems to meet wants satisfied by one more pure. But the paganism I have just described barely rises above the level of fetishism: it is thus hard to understand why the mind of the nominal Hindu should be invincibly prejudiced against the reception of a higher form of religion and, as a matter of fact, Muhammadanism has been extensively accepted."¹⁵⁹

Additionally, one can see his legend being continued in the twenty-first century as well. His birthday is celebrated with joy and reverence, with rituals (like a *havan*)¹⁶⁰ and a public gathering to hold a procession (*shobha yatra*)¹⁶¹ honouring Baba Kalu, in which children and adults participate alike. As recently as September, 2020, his birthday was celebrated with pomp and enthusiasm in Mohalla Ramleela Tilla of Muzaffarnagar, keeping the safety measures and precautions in mind.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ "On the occasion of Baba Kalu's birthday, a *havan poojan* was organized in Ramleela Tilla", *Public*, accessed October 23, 2020.

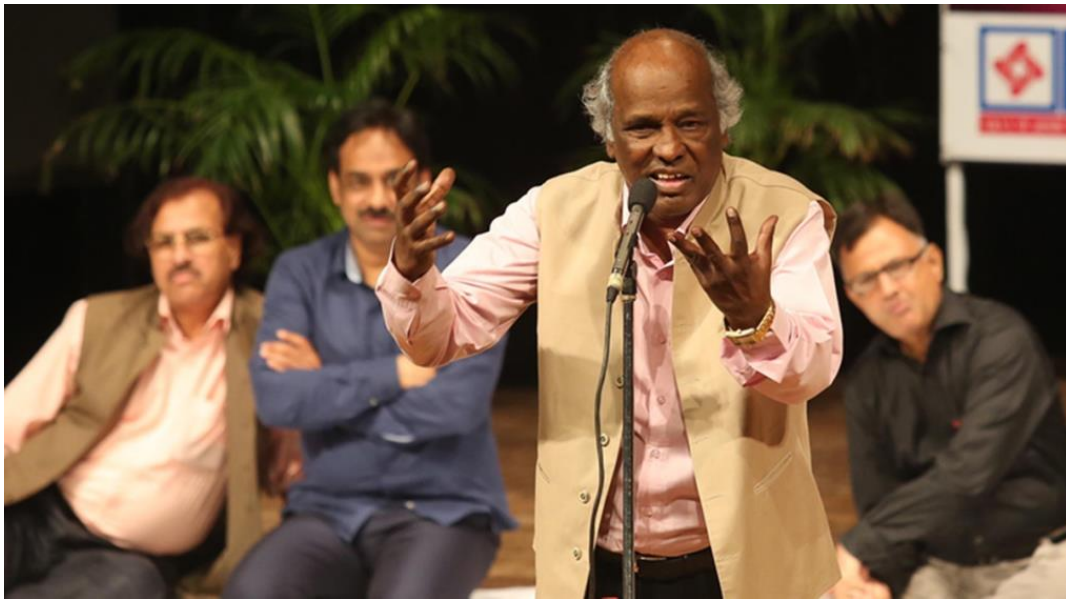
¹⁶¹ "In Muzaffarnagar's Vahelna, Baba Kalu's procession march is carried out with revelry", *Public*, accessed October 23, 2020.

¹⁶² "Baba Kalu's *jayanti* celebrated through a *yagya*", *Live Hindustan*, accessed October 23, 2020.

Literary and Performing Arts

Poetry

The district of Muzaffarnagar is connected to many gifted poets of India. One such contemporary talent is that of Rahat Indori, who unfortunately passed away recently due to the coronavirus.¹⁶³ A modern Urdu poet, unlike his contemporaries at the time, Indori was truly unique given his approach towards poetry.



“In his early days, Rahat used to perform with Noor Indori, a senior poet from his hometown. He used to sing ghazals at mushairas right from the beginning.”

Caption and Image Source: The Indian Express (<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/rahat-indori-a-modern-urdu-poet-6553517/>)

In the late seventies, he gained recognition throughout the country when Vaseem Bareilvi caught his talent. Introduced in Muzaffarnagar by Bareilvi with the words, ‘*a tarannum shikan shayar*’ (a poet who can challenge singing), it laid emphasis on Rahat’s heavy voice and theatrical talent, too.¹⁶⁴ Such performative aspects are not considered to fit in with *mushairas*, and certain poets compare it to *nautanki*.¹⁶⁵ His early career witnessed him performing with a senior poet Noor Indori, singing *ghazals* at *mushairas*.

¹⁶³ Alvi, Khalid. “A Modern Urdu Poet.” *The Indian Express*, August 13, 2020.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

He was also a man of his own, and an example of this can be his interaction with Sayed Murtaza, the then Member of Parliament from Muzaffarnagar.¹⁶⁶ Murtaza requested Rahat to sing a ghazal, but he declined even after threats from the organizers. While leaving, he said, “Your town is not Hindustan, so don’t invite me. For, I am bound to recite according to my mood.”¹⁶⁷ Rahat Indori wrote and published his poems in Hindi and Urdu. Writing with raw emotions and vivid imagery, his works were well read by the public, but did not receive proper recognition from critics. One of his couplets for the general audience goes thus:

*“Sabhi ka khoon hai shaamil yahan ki mitti mein
Kisi key baap ka Hindostan thodi hai”¹⁶⁸*

(Translation: Everybody has sacrificed blood for the sake of the country, Hindustan doesn’t belong to anybody’s father.)



Muzaffar Razmi.

Image Source: Muslimsaleem’s Blog (<https://muslimsaleem.wordpress.com/2012/09/20/lamhon-nay-khata-kee-thipoet-muzaffar-razmi-dead/>)

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

Another Urdu poet famous for his mushaira is Muzaffar Razmi, who was born at Kairana in Muzaffarnagar.¹⁶⁹

I. K. Gujral took oath as the Prime Minister of India in 1997, and read Razmi's couplet during the ceremony:

*“ye jabr bhī dekhā hai tārīkh kī nazroñ ne
lamhoñ ne khatā kī thī sadiyoñ ne sazā paa.”¹⁷⁰*

This couplet has been recited by various eminent personalities and in parliament speeches, but the name and works of Muzaffar Razmi are barely known. Due to it being used frequently by position holders, this particular couplet is also associated with describing certain decisions (like the Partition), which deeply impacted the historical narrative and the citizens of India.¹⁷¹

Nautanki

An operatic form of theatre, forming an amalgamation of music, dance, story, dialogue, melodrama and magic, *nautanki* enthralls a wide range of audiences. It originated in the late 19th century in Uttar Pradesh (then United Provinces of Agra and Oudh), and was known as *svang*.¹⁷² With performances being held in the open, it attained a popular status quickly. These were held on a provisional stage and were usually attended by all the village members, from adults to children, who were enamoured by the magical performances. Nautankis were not limited to the villages; they were performed in towns, cities, bazaars, and parks.

Suresh Awasthi has pointed out, “While Nautanki, as part of the Saangita tradition, is related, both artistically and historically, to other forms such as the Sang or Swang, Bhagat, Khyal and Maach, it evolved certain distinctive features, especially in its own musical style.”

It used to and continues to flourish in centres like Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Lucknow, and Agra. Such centres of nautanki have gone through an evolution, producing their very own local styles and traditions.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ “Muzaffar Razmi,” Rekhta, accessed September 27, 2020.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Mehrotra, Deepti Priya. “Shades of Nautanki: North India’s Operatic Theatre.” *Sahapedia*, June 02, 2020.

¹⁷³ Awasthi, Suresh. “Nautanki: An Operatic Theatre.” *Sahapedia*: page 25.

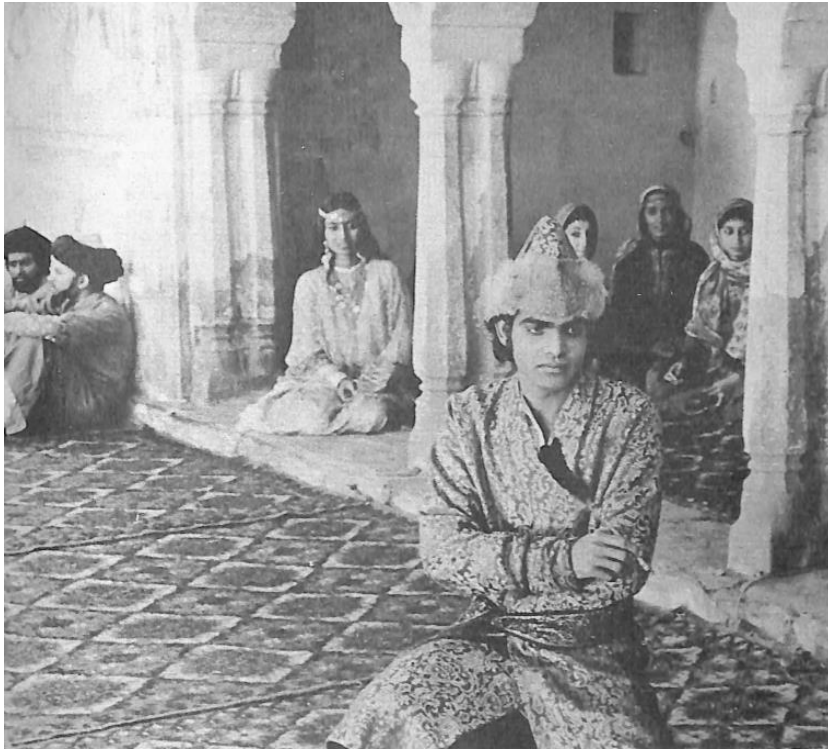


Image Source: Sahapedia (<https://www.sahapedia.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/Nautanki%20An%20Operatic%20Theatre.pdf>)



From Satya Harishchandra.

Image Source: Sahapedia (<https://www.sahapedia.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/Nautanki%20An%20Operatic%20Theatre.pdf>)



From Amar Singh Rathor.

Image Source: Sahapedia (<https://www.sahapedia.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/Nautanki%20An%20Operatic%20Theatre.pdf>)



From Laila Majnu.

Image Source: Sahapedia (<https://www.sahapedia.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/Nautanki%20An%20Operatic%20Theatre.pdf>)

The Sugar Bowl of India

The district of Muzaffarnagar is famously recognized as ‘The Sugar Bowl of India’, owing to the growth of sugar and jaggery production here. With so much emphasis on these industries, as well as farming activities, it has also become a centre of the jaggery trade. The Economic Survey sheds light on how more than 40% of the population is involved in agriculture, as well as the district having the highest agricultural GDP in Uttar Pradesh (and the state’s largest granary, too).¹⁷⁴ With 13 sugar mills in the district (‘Khatauli Mill’ being the largest in Asia), the jaggery market in Muzaffarnagar is the largest in the continent.¹⁷⁵

Efforts have been made towards the revival of this trade and craft of jaggery-making to continue to help the people sustain their livelihoods. In 2019, a three day festival ‘Gur Mahotsav’ took place in Muzaffarnagar from May 30 onwards, as a step towards the same.¹⁷⁶ In a report published by Anuj Kumar for The Hindu, the festival has been extensively covered for the readers. Kumar highlights the involvement of various stakeholders, like researchers, producers, and marketing teams.¹⁷⁷ Organized under Uttar Pradesh government’s ‘One District, One Product’ scheme¹⁷⁸, the Gur Mahotsav successfully shed light on a variety of aspects. These included factors like packaging, promoting jaggery and sugarcane juice, and methods of increasing organic jaggery production.



Image Source: Amar Ujala (<https://www.amarujala.com/photo-gallery/uttar-pradesh/meerut/asia-largest-jaggery-market-in-muzaffarnagar-craveing-for-jaggery-only-ten-percent-arrival>)

¹⁷⁴ “About District,” Official website of Muzaffarnagar, Government of India, accessed September 24, 2020.

¹⁷⁵ “Muzaffarnagar,” My Uttar Pradesh, last modified June 28, 2017.

¹⁷⁶ Kumar, Anuj. “All for a gur cause: Muzaffarnagar to host jaggery fest.” *The Hindu*, May 21, 2019.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.



Image Source: Amar Ujala (<https://www.amarujala.com/photo-gallery/uttar-pradesh/meerut/asia-largest-jaggery-market-in-muzaffarnagar-craveing-for-jaggery-only-ten-percent-arrival>)

“Muzaffarnagar is arguably the biggest *mandi* (marketplace) for *gur* in Asia. Here the farmers produce around 60 varieties of it. The festival is being used as an opportunity to update our data bank on the production of jaggery and the number of *kolhus* (crushers) in the district,” said Amit Kumar, Additional District Magistrate, Muzaffarnagar, in conversation with The Hindu.¹⁷⁹

According to Muzaffarnagar Market Secretary, Rakesh Kumar Singh, around 10,74,838 quintals of jaggery were sold in the *mandi* in 2018-19. “One of the biggest worries is the use of chemicals in jaggery production. We are making farmers aware of the ill-effects of indiscriminate use of chemical fertilisers and the festival is another step in that direction.”¹⁸⁰

Singh also raised two more important points: the issue of jaggery mafia who buy directly from the farmers (leading to government revenue loss), and the prevalence of *shakkar* (powdered jaggery) in tea.¹⁸¹ The latter is directly related to popular consumption patterns.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.



“The event will also focus on the medicinal properties of gur that make it a healthier substitute for sugar.”

Caption and Image Source: The Hindu (<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/all-for-a-gur-cause-muzaffarnagar-to-host-jaggery-fest/article27199716.ece#>)

BIJNOR DISTRICT



Map of Bijnor District. Source: <https://www.jatland.com/home/File:Bijnor-district-map.jpg>

About Bijnor District

The district Bijnor forms a part of Meerut division and occupies the north-west position of the Rohilkhand or Bareilly division. It is in the northern part i.e., a terai belt of Uttar Pradesh. It is bounded by the districts of Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar and Meerut in the Western part and is separated by the river Ganga on its extreme northern strip.¹⁸²



Ganga Aarti in Bijnor. Source: Amar Ujala

The bottomless mud of the swampy area of Bijnor, in which an elephant was once engulfed, was converted into rich rice fields. Due to a series of wet years, cultivators left their holdings and the fields relapsed into the grass jungle; eventually the inhabitants fled during the great scare of 1894, caused by the expectation of a disastrous flood from the breaking of an embankment which held up in the Gohna Lake, Garhwal.

The mango groves of Bijnor are famous: the trees are luxuriant and fruits attain considerable perfection. In the late years, the ancient superstition which forbade the destruction of groves had almost disappeared owing to the greater demand for timber.

A series of famines hit northern India from 1770- 1943. During the famine of 1803-4 when Bijnor was still a part of Moradabad, the whole country was disorganized by general lawlessness and invasion of the Marathas; grain riots broke out in several regions. The Pardah-Nashin women in Bijnor and other provinces were the worst sufferers of the great famines of 1896.

¹⁸² Nevill. H.R. 1908. District Gazetteer of Bijnor. Allahabad: Government Press., vol. XIV, p. 1

History and Popular Local Legends

Ancient and Early Medieval Period

Even though there are very few sources that have been found that give evidence of ancient time, the presence of some mounds near some villages and some prehistoric weapons and tools found here hint at the beginning of civilisation in this region near village Rajpur from the Copper age or chalcolithic age. Many popular legends and myths connect it with the Mahabharata and Ramayana periods which give this place a strong sense of antiquity.

One of the popular origin myths of Bijnor District is based on how it was named. The name Bijnor is attributed to Raja Ben whose mention we find in the Mahabharata and even in the Puranas; a king of Northern India who never realized revenue or tax from his subjects. Instead he raised them by selling *bijana* (fans) that he manufactured himself and hence the town obtained its name Bijnor.¹⁸³ A site called *Raja Ben ki Kherra* present in the northern region of the city testifies to this popular legend.¹⁸⁴

Sitabani is a very famous temple built up at the sight of **Bashta**, a pargana of Bijnor Tehsil. It is assumed by local legend that the purification of Sita (wife of Lord Rama) had taken place at this place, so the temple was constructed here and is known by the name of Sitabani.

Another local legend relates that Shakuntala, a major character in Kalidas' immortal Sanskrit play *Abhigyan Shakuntalam* was as a child found near **Rawli** on the banks of River Malini¹⁸⁵ by the sage Kanva and brought up in his ashram. This popular belief goes back to the oldest historical proof about the location of the district.¹⁸⁶ Panini mentions 'pura' ending names of towns like Mardeyapura, probably Mandawar in Bijnor where the ancient route to Hastinapura crossed the Ganga river on the opposite bank.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³(Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers, 1981, p. 7)

¹⁸⁴Ibid, p. 281

¹⁸⁵ Malini river originates from the Shivalika mountain ranges in Uttarakhand and flows through Bijnor and then merges with the river Ganga. Mention of this river can be also found in the Adi parva of Mahabharata. (Hinduism Beta)<https://hinduism.stackexchange.com/questions/36211/geography-of-malini-river>

¹⁸⁶ Nevill. H.R. 1908. District Gazetteer of Bijnor. Allahabad: Government Press., vol. XIV, p.180

¹⁸⁷VS Agrawala India As Known To Panini, Published by University of Lucknow, p.64



Kanva Ashram, Source: Facebook/Bijnor Club Page, <https://fr-fr.facebook.com/BijnorClubBijnor/posts/1291460110897711/>

This place is also associated with Sita. In Pargana Bashta, it is believed that Sita's purification by fire took place. It is here that a temple has been built dedicated to Sita. However no historical evidence cites this relevance.¹⁸⁸ Some say that it is the site where the earth had split open and she went inside.¹⁸⁹



Purification of Sita, Source: Quora, <https://www.quora.com/Do-you-think-Shri-Ram-was-right-in-asking-Sita-for-Agni-Pariksha>

¹⁸⁸(Nevill, Bijnor: A Gazetteer, Volume XIV of the district Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, 1908, p. 159)

¹⁸⁹(Bijnor)<https://bharatdiscovery.org/india/%E0%A4%AC%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%9C%E0%A4%A8%E0%A5%8C%E0%A4%B0>

During the supremacy of the **Panchala kingdom**, present day Bijnor was included in the empire. The district of Bijnor forms the part of the Panchala which was a great kingdom at the time of the Mahabharata war. The country came to be known as Panchala from the five sons of Bhrimayasva. The Panchalas were, thus, the branch of the Bharats. According to the Satapatha Brahmana, Kirvi was the older name of the Panchalas who were a composite tribe closely associated with the Kurus who ruled at Hastinapur.¹⁹⁰ Even though mention of the Panchala kingdom is missing in the Rig Veda Samhita, allusions are present to the “Battle of ten Kings” which is said to have been fought between the Bharatas (descendants of Raja Dushyant) led by Sudasa, who is said to be the first Raja or king of the country in common parlance¹⁹¹, and other Vedic tribes led by Vishwamitra. These battles can be traced back to the times of Divodasa, who is thought to be father or grandfather of Sudasa. He was in conflict with the Turvasa, Yadu, Puru. Though later it is believed that the Bharatas and the Puru tribe came together and formed the Kuru tribe.



Panchala Kingdom in ancient India, Source: <https://indiathedestiny.com/>

Divodasa was the patron of Bharadwaj, father of Dronacharya, the famous preceptor of the Pandavas and the Kauravas in the Mahabharata; who had his ashram on the banks of river Ganga in this district.

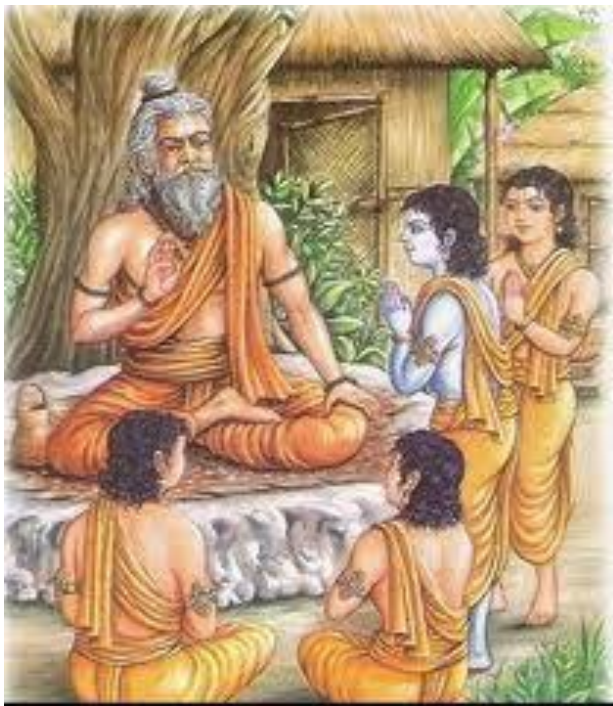
The Panchala kingdom was divided into north and southern parts after **Dronacharya** engaged in a tussle with Drupad or Yagyasena, son of Prishata who was the king of Panchala. Once, on being insulted by him, Drona asked his disciples to defeat him and take half his kingdom. They

¹⁹⁰Nevill. H.R. 1908. District Gazetteer of Bijnor. Allahabad: Government Press., vol. XIV

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

emerged successful and gave it to their guru. Thus the Ganga became the dividing line and the present district of Bijnor fell under the reign of Drona, but if he directly ruled or not is not known.

Sandwar in this district, according to local tradition, is the site of Dronacharya's ashram and his school of archery and military training. A big gate found here is considered to be the gate of this ashram and a pond found here locally known as the Dronasagar marks the site of the academy. It is believed that Drupad following this incident performed penance in order to acquire a son who would avenge his defeat by Dronacharya and kill him.¹⁹² Thus Dhristadyumna was born as a result; they were also joined by the Somakas and the Srinjayas on their side in the Mahabharata war against the Kauravas on whose side Dronacharya fought.



Representational image: Dronacharya's Ashram, Source: medium.com

According to local tradition, a monument by the name of Vidurkuti is said to be the dwelling place of the famous saint Vidur who was an eyewitness of this ruinous war and who during the course of the war brought all the womenfolk of the Pandavas from Hastinapur to this place situated in Daranagar. A memorial has been constructed at this site, which is opposite Hastinapur across the Ganges.¹⁹³

¹⁹²(Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers: Bijnor District, 1981, p. 21)

¹⁹³ Ibid, p. 21



Vidurkuti, Source: Bijnor.nic.in, <https://bijnor.nic.in/tourist-place/bijnor-2/>



Representational image: Vidur. Source: Dainik Bhaskar, <https://www.bhaskar.com/religion/jeevan-mantra/news/vidur-niti-mahabharata-life-management-tips-in-hindi-facts-about-mahabharata-126759846.html>



Daranagar, Source: Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daranagar>

‘Daranagar was of historical importance during Mahabharata. When the war between Kauravas and Pandavas began, both sides wished to safeguard their wives and children under the protection of Vidur Kuti before starting the war. Since it took much place to house all the family members of the Kauravas and Pandavas, Vidur Kuti established an exclusive region which was called Daranagar.’¹⁹⁴

In the age of imperial Magadha, this region fell within the territories of the North Panchala kingdom; Ahicchatra was the capital. It formed one of the sixteen mahajanapadas. Mention of this place can be found in many texts of the Buddhist corpus like the *Jatakas* and other works like the *Divyadana* and *Uttardhyana Sutra*. It was during this time that the kingdom of Panchala which originally was a monarchical state became a sangha/ republican corporation and was one of the sixteen mahajanapadas.

After this, the remarkable history of this tract can be seen when the **Nandas** came to power and they brought the whole of Northern and Central India under their sway. According to the Puranas, Mahapadma Nanda, described as the second Parashurama, “the exterminator of the entire Kshatriya race” and as the sole sovereign, is believed to have brought the whole of country under his sway; thus it is assumed that this tract was within the territories of the Nanda Empire.

After the Nandas this tract came under the **Mauryan Empire** and in Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, mention is made of Panchala kingdom as one of the important vassals that had an important

¹⁹⁴<https://bijnor.nic.in/tourist-place/bijnor/>

existence and was a separate entity. However there are no remarkable events of this period related to this tract.

The **Sungas** under Pushyamitra Sunga succeeded the Mauryas. According to the *Divya Vadana*, a Buddhist treatise, the Panchala region, which included Bijnor, fell in his kingdom. After the fall of the Sungas, the subsequent phase did not have any central authority and hence many foreign powers came and invaded this region and often established their suzerainty for short periods of time.

The first among them were the Bactrian Greeks. Not much is known about this time period except that a few coins have been found from a small mound or kherra near in Mandawar on the left bank of the Ganga in 1886. Five gold coins of the Indo-Scythian king Vasudeva have been found and a gold coin of the king Bhrishaka was found on the bank of the Ganges Khadir. Now they have been sent to the Lucknow museum.¹⁹⁵



A gold coin from the Kidarite period in Brahmi inscription, representing Figure of Ardochsho seated facing. (reverse)Figure of King standing to left; r. hand over altar.(obverse), excavated in Bijnor. Source: British Museum, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1890-0409-2

¹⁹⁵(Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Bijnor District, 1981, p. 24)

The Scythians were supplanted by the Kushanas, even though many local principalities continued to remain in power. However many Kushana coins have been found in the Gangetic plains and this includes Bijnor.

Following the Kushans, many local small-scale kingdoms sprang up. One of the known ones was of the Nagas, the serpent-worshipping non-Aryan tribe. They rose to prominence and it is believed that they most likely ruled in Western Uttar Pradesh comprising the tract of Bijnor.

The whole of Northern India was divided into a number of small kingdoms until the Guptas came to power. The Gupta Empire continued to flourish till the death of Skandagupta in 467A.D. Following his death, the disintegration began in the absence of any competent successor. Many petty principalities sprouted during this time within its dominions. The final blow was struck by the Vakataks and the Maukharis under Yasodharman. It is believed that during the reign of Grahavarman the Maukhari kingdom included the tract comprising Bijnor. It is because of this that certain Maukhari kingdoms were found in this region.¹⁹⁶

Even the famous Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang is said to have visited this place and stayed here for a short while. The Mo-ti-pu-lo in his account is identified with Matipura which is later day Mandawar. The Kingdom of Mo-ti-pu-lo may certainly have been a part of this district and Buddhism still flourished; this has been proven by the terracotta tablets discovered in the Mordhwaj fort in Najibabad.



Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim and explorer, Source: Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xuanzang>

¹⁹⁶(Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Bijnor District, 1981), p.25

In his account, Hiuen Tsang describes this tract as a fertile one with a genial climate. He also described the people here to have followed different religions including Buddhism. He had as many as 800 Buddhist brethren here, who were adherents of the Sarvastivadin school of Hinayana sect. He described the presence of more than ten Buddhist monasteries, the existence of which is identifiable by the existence of several mounds in and around Mandawar.¹⁹⁷

Another place of antiquity found here known as **Mordhwaj has been found near the town of Mandawar in Bijnor district**, the traces of its ancient remains were found by Alexander Cunningham. The ancient remains hint at the presence of a large Buddhist chaitya. From the mound present here two large terracotta medals and two dozen smaller clay seals have been excavated by Cunningham, which bore the impression of the seated figure of Buddha.¹⁹⁸ The Buddhist relics, seals and other evidence are dated back to the 6th century A.D. Other than the Buddhist relics, three stone heads have been found, one of which is of Parshvanath, the Jain Tirthankar, from a locally found Parshvanath Durg/fort dating back to almost 7th- 8th century A.D. These bits of evidence go on to show that Jainism as well as Buddhism had a considerable amount of influence in this area during this period. It is believed that there were almost 20 Buddhist monasteries and about 50 Brahmanical temples.¹⁹⁹

It is said that this region came under the dominion of many other dynasties that came in power for short periods; like the Pratihara dynasty, which can be corroborated by the Sajan plates. After the Gurjara-Pratiharas, the Gahadavalas took over. In the intervening period between the two empires, many small principalities rose to scene and faded out. The last ruler of the Gahadavalas, Jayachandra was defeated by Muhammad Ghori in 1193-1194 AD. This marked the beginning of the rule of the Delhi sultans in this region.²⁰⁰

Late Medieval to Modern Period

During the early days of the Delhi Sultanate, the region of Bijnor came under the tract known as Katehr or Rohilkhand and was included in the single government of Budaun.²⁰¹ Budaun was subjugated by Qutubuddin Aibak in 1197-98; however he did not go as far as Bijnor. In 1202 he led another expedition to Budaun and took over this region as far as Mandawar which is near the Siwalik hill, and made Iltutmish the governor.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 25

¹⁹⁸(Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Bijnor District, 1981), p. 26

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 26

²⁰⁰(Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Bijnor District, 1981), p.27

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 28



Representational image of Iltutmish, source: Pinterest, <https://in.pinterest.com/pin/742812532275007693/>

In 1227 AD Iltutmish led a large expedition to this area and punished the recalcitrant Katehriya Rajputs, conquered the whole of Katehr and captured the Mandawar fortress. It is believed that the mosque near this fortress was built by him during his campaign.²⁰²



Mandawar fort, source: Bijnor.nic.in, <https://bijnor.nic.in/tourist-place/najibabad-2/>

²⁰² Ibid, p. 29

After the death of Iltutmish, the stronghold vanished and in the atmosphere of frenzy the authority of the Delhi Sultans was flouted everywhere, including in Bijnor.

Thus, in the trans-Gangetic area, the Katehriyas frequently raided. It was then during the reign of Balban that the Katehriyas received a major setback. In 1254 he advanced along towards Bijnor. Exasperated by the repeated insurgence created by the Katehriyas he sought to establish some order. He assembled huge forces and punished the Katehriyas by plundering their habitations and looting them. This gory incident also finds mention in Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firoz-Shahi*.²⁰³ However the peace and tranquility established by Balban did not last long.

During the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khilji, Mughal forces under Ali Beg Gurgan, a descendant of Chingez Khan, raided this region. In order to face the attack the Sultan sent Malik Kafur to resist the invading Mughals.

This tract was rendered far worse in 1380 when Sultan Firuz Tughlaq attacked Katehr to avenge the treacherous murder of Saiyid Muhammad who was the governor of Budaun and his brother by the leading zamindar of Katehr, Rai Kharku. It was during this feat that the whole tract as far as the western Rohilkhand was rendered into a waste, nothing more than a hunting preserve.

After the death of Firuz the empire fell into a state of chaos. By 1395, Nusrat Shah who held Sambhal and Muhammad Shah who held Delhi were locked in continuing rivalry and battle until the news of Timur's invasion arrived, who invaded this region in 1398. After Timur's departure, a state of confusion and frenzy ensued in this region due to the internal dissensions in Delhi, which led to frequent raids and ravages. Before the long peaceful reign of Akbar began, this tract was under the dominance of Sher Shah for a brief period of time.²⁰⁴

At the beginning of Akbar's reign the district and its neighbourhood appear to have been infiltrated by the Afghans. Ali Quli Khan was sent to this region with an army. Meanwhile the Mirzas who were Akbar's relatives began to rebel and ravaged Bijnor. During the time of **Akbar**, Bijnor was part of his Mughal Empire.

The fiscal records preserved in the *Ain-e-Akbari* gives us a detailed insight into the general condition of the district in that period. Another town from the Bijnor district, **Nagina**, is mentioned as the headquarters of a mahal/pargana in the *Ain-e-Akbari*.

The entire district of Bijnor fell in the Sarkar of Sambhal in the subah or province of Awadh. The district with the rest of Katehr appears to have remained tranquil for a considerable period after the strong and peaceful administration of Akbar came to an end as no contemporary historian mentions any outbreaks or associates this district with any

²⁰³(Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Bijnor District, 1981), p. 30

²⁰⁴(Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Bijnor District, 1981, pp. 34,35)

disquietude. This long phase of peace prevailed till about the end of Aurangzeb's reign when the seeds of disintegration took firm roots.²⁰⁵

The district continued to be administered from Sambhal through the agency of a deputy. The Katehriya Rajputs appear to have maintained some sort of power. In 1624, Raj Ram, a Rajput leader incurred the emperor's displeasure on account of his bold attack on the Terai region and the oppression which he let loose. He was defeated and killed by Rustam Khan Dakhini who continued to hold this region till 1658 when he was defeated and killed at Samogrh in a battle between Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh. His jagir was then granted to a pardoned rebel, Mohammed Qasim Khan, Mir Atish. After this nothing is heard of this region till much after Aurangzeb's death.

On the eve of Aurangzeb's death the area comprising the present district of Bijnor formed part of the Sarkar of Sambhal in the subah of Delhi and was held in jagir by Qamar-ud-din Khan, the imperial vizier. During the reign of Bahadur Shah Zafar, Daud Khan, an Afghan Slave who originally belonged to Afghanistan, deserted his master and came to India and took up service in Katehr under a local chief. Around the same time, some of his followers had also settled down in Bijnor. He had a foster son Ali Muhammad Khan who assumed leadership of the Afghans right after his death. They were commonly known as the **Rohillas** and in 1722 enrolled himself as a jamadar in the personal force of the imperial faujdar of Moradabad.²⁰⁶

During the early **18th century**, the Rohilla Pashtuns established their independence in the area called Rohilkhand by them. Around 1739, the Rohilla chief Ali Mohammed Khan declared himself to be independent and to augment his possession he started rampaging in this region and made his first annexations in Bijnor, the rest of which soon fell under the Rohilla domination. Qamaruddin Khan, the imperial vizier who held Bijnor in fief directed to expel the Rohilla Chief; however the Rohillas seized the bulk of Sambhal and successfully defeated the opponents and managed to annex a wide range of territory including Bijnor, Moradabad, Shahbad, Shahjahanpur and Parganas of Bareilly.²⁰⁷

When Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India in 1748, Ali Muhammad strengthened his position by acquiring and annexing more areas like Nagal, Jalalabad, Dhampur and Sherkot. After the death of Ali Muhammad Khan there was confusion and instability in the Rohilla territory.

The Rohilla principality was divided among the sons of Ali Muhammad Khan, Bijnor going to the joint share of Sadullah Khan and Allah Yar Khan. But their dissensions prompted Hafiz

²⁰⁵ Ibid, p.37

²⁰⁶(Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Bijnor District, 1981), p. 39

²⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 40

Rahmat Khan to strike a fresh compromise according to which Bijnor went to Dunde Khan, who gave his daughter in marriage to Najib Khan which added to the prestige of the latter.



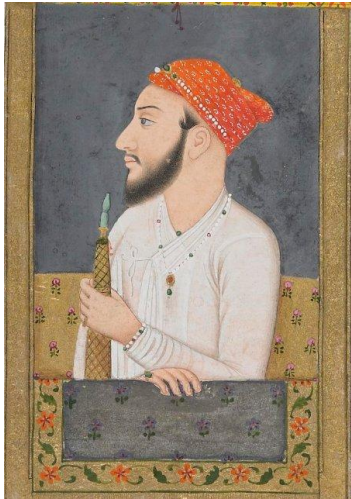
Najibabad, popularly called as “Gateway of Himalayas” is situated about 37 km from Bijnor. The city was founded by Nawab Najib-ud-Daulah who is also called as Najib Khan. The famous Nijab-ud-Daulah’s fort is located in this area, it was addressed as Sultana Dakoo’s shelter by the English East India Company. Image Source: <https://bijnor.nic.in/tourist-place/najibabad/>

In a short time Najib Khan figured prominently at the imperial court and was appointed the Mir bakshi with the title of **Najib-ud-Daulah** about 1755, the year in which he founded the town of **Najibabad** and erected in tahsil Najibabad, the stone fort of Pathargarh.²⁰⁸

In 1759 the Marathas embarked upon a scheme to crush Najib-ud-daulah permanently. On hearing this Najib-ud-Daulah abdicated the throne and left it to Zabita Khan, his son. Zabita Khan solicited help from Shuja-ud-daulah, the nawab of Awadh. In the month-long struggle, the Marathas ransacked a large number of villages in the region covering the district of Bijnor. The Rohillas failed to offer effective resistance. However things changed after the Marathas were beaten at the Battle of Panipat in 1761. Najib-ud-daulah became Mir Bakshi at the imperial court.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸(Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Bijnor District, 1981), p.42

²⁰⁹(Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Bijnor District, 1981), p. 42



Zabita Khan, Source: Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zabita_Khan

Inspite of many invasions and attacks by the Marathas, it was Shuja-ud-daulah who soon annexed Zabita Khan's forts of Najibabad and Pathargarh.²¹⁰



Patthargarh fort outside Najibabad Uttar Pradesh, India. 1814-15. Patthargarh fort, built by Najib-ud-Daulah, within a mile of the city, in 1755 .

Image Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Patthargarh_fort_outside_Najibabad,_1814-15.jpg

²¹⁰(Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Bijnor District, 1981, p. 45)

Thus, the whole of Rohilkhand came into the possession of Shuja-ud-daula. Under the new dispensation, Najibabad became a flourishing centre of the cotton industry. A variety of cotton and silk products were then transported by land to Surat and Calcutta and from there shipped to Persia, East Asia and Europe.

Soon after, many Rohillas were driven out of the Doab. Subsequently together with the Sikhs they flocked to the standard of the banished Zabita Khan and made occasional raids on Bijnor but were repulsed in Rohilkhand by Mirza Muhammad Qasim Khan, the amil of Asaf-ud-daulah. The increasing debt on account of the maintenance of British forces led to the surrender of the whole of Rohilkhand, including Bijnor, to the British by the treaty of November 10, 1801. At that time the present district of Bijnor formed part of the Moradabad district. In 1817-1824 it became the headquarters of the newly-formed district of northern Moradabad. In 1824 the district headquarters was shifted to Bijnor. The town of Nagina was the center of conflicts between rival parties during the sepoy mutiny.²¹¹

However, the British regime created resentment in the atmosphere of misgovernance and negligence which resulted in a series of severe famines in 1803-04 and in 1837-38 in Bijnor. Already by the second half of the 19th century, most regions of north India were reeking with a strong spirit of revolution with the motive of overthrowing the British rule. It was around this time that the revolt of 1857 had started. Improvements in transport were made during the Rohilla rule but major strides were made after the sepoy mutiny of 1857.

The Indian soldiers entered Nagina on May 21 where they tried to plunder the tehsil treasury; however the news of their march had preceded them and the tehsil officials had taken adequate defensive measures to stop them from laying hands on the treasure. The same day many prisoners broke out of the Bijnor jail, stormed the main gate, dislodged it and escaped. Immediately the magistrate arrived and opened fire killing seven fugitives, and captured many of them. The rest of them escaped this deadly combat and tried to seek refuge on the bank of the Ganga.²¹²

The British tried to save the valuables of the Bijnor treasury by throwing the cash deep into the well. Immediately afterwards the nawab of Najibabad, Mahmud Khan arrived with a number of empty carts to carry off the treasure to Najibabad; however the British decided to retaliate with the help of the retainers of the leading Hindu zamindars. The British then proceeded against the Gujars, Banjaras and Mewatis who had openly joined the struggle. The British directed an expedition to Chandpur and on the way destroyed a Mewati village. The British army burnt down the villages of Bhojpur, Jahangirpuri, Sheikhpura, Husainapura, Aminapura and Narayanpur.

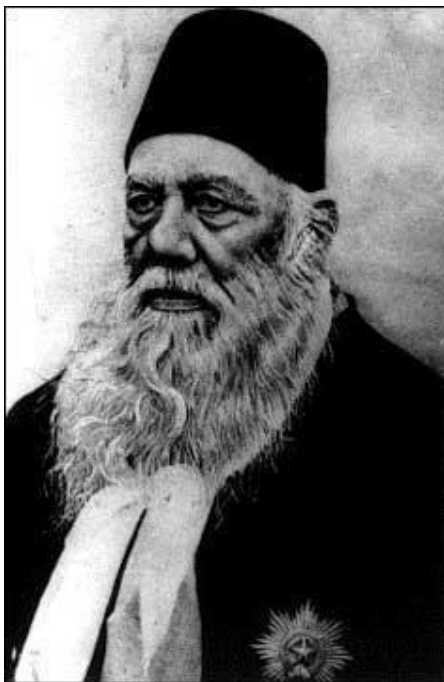
Eventually when Mahmud Khan returned, the Pathans and other sepoys enlisted by the British were found to be leaning towards Mahmud Khan. "The idea that the British rule would

²¹¹Imperial Gazetteer of India, v. 18, p. 299.

²¹² Ibid, p. 47-48

be overthrown had taken deep root in the hearts of the people and it was believed by the people that Mahmud Khan would occupy the throne. Therefore every inhabitant of this district found it expedient to have relations with Mahmud Khan."²¹³ This made the British suspicious of the natives who were enlisted by them.

Syed Ahmed Khan, a subordinate judge of Bijnor, who was in discord with Mahmud Khan persuaded him to leave the Europeans unmolested. As the British could no longer maintain law and order in this district they moved all the European women and children to the other side of the Ganga. The authorities realising the inability of the Hindu zamindars to hold out against Mahmud Khan, left the district on June 8.



Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Source: Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syed_Ahmad_Khan

Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan who was posted in this district as the sadr amin or a subordinate judge, wrote the *Tarikh Sarkashiy-i Dhillia Bijnor* (History of the Revolt in Bijnor), which was the first report of a contemporary event, published in Urdu.²¹⁴ It was a fairly detailed account.

He cites that one of the strong causes that led to the outbreak was the fact that the leading social group in Rohilkhand at that time was the descendants of the Pathans, who had ruled Rohilkhand in the first half of the 18th Century before their conquest by the combination of Oudh, the Marathas, and the British. In 1801 the British East India Company took over the entire Division to incorporate Rohilkhand into their territories. The Pathans remained restive, however, and their resentment and instability were deeply engraved. These chiefs who found

²¹³ Ibid, p.49

²¹⁴(Khan S. S., tarikh-e sarkashi-e zila-e bijnor: History of the Bijnor Rebellion 1857)

themselves estranged were exasperated and aggrieved as they found themselves without employment under the new British Government and lost hopes of rising in the State or army and were thus, continually breaking out into acts of insubordination and violence. Rohilkhand was the only region in Northern India where the British were routed during the Revolt.²¹⁵ He was a colonial servant and believed that the English rule is the harbinger of change and modernity and thought the native elements would create a state of anomaly and discordance.²¹⁶

Mahmud Khan assumed power and proclaimed himself to be the ruler of this district, administering on behalf of the emperor of Delhi. He brought a whole lot of reforms. The Hindu zamindars of Bijnor, taking advantage of the situation, decided to attack him and drive him out of Bijnor to Najibabad.

This district had a strong population of Muslims and Hindus. The dominant community in these towns, moreover, was Muslim, particularly of the Shaikh, Sayyid, and Pathan classes. The countryside, however, was dominated by zamindari holdings under the leadership of the great Hindu landlords of Sherkot, Tajpur, and Haldaur; along with them the Jats, and the pastoral Gujars (Ahirs) who had a strong base at Mandawar also actively took part in the revolt.

He also took some measures to restore the British administration. Syed Ahmad Khan and Mahmud Rahmat Khan were ordered to take charge. The district again came under the British administration for a few days as soon the nawab's troops at Nagina and Najibabad made fresh advances with strong Islamic fervour, thus infusing all the rancour of a religious war.

Although his authority was re-established in Bijnor many Hindu landholders were opposed to him. Hence in the ensuing months several skirmishes took place between these chiefs and the nawab's troops under Ahmad Ullah Khan at Nagina, Haldaur, Phiona and Sherkot but ultimately Mahmud Khan reigned supreme throughout the district. Mahmud Khan and his lieutenants divided the district among themselves, each ruling as a nominal ruler of a tehsil.²¹⁷

Meanwhile the British instigated the principal landholders to attack Bijnor. This effort was aborted resulting in a futile attempt as a large number of freedom fighters deterred the British allies at Chandpur, who now turned against the local landholders who were pro British. The freedom fighters captured Randhir Singh of Haldaur, a staunch British supporter. He was captured and confined in Najibabad. This success attracted the attention of a large number of freedom fighters like Kazi Inayat Khan Ali, Dalel Singh and three royal princes from Delhi. Joined by them the struggle against the British was now carried across the Ganga. Emboldened by a series of successful raids against the police outposts on the right bank of

²¹⁵ Ibid

²¹⁶ Ibid

²¹⁷(Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Bijnor District, 1981), p. 50

the Ganga, they set fire on government buildings or anything that had a semblance of colonial rule and successfully dispersed the troops sent against them.²¹⁸

On April 21, the British defeated Mahmud Khan's force, occupied Bijnor and from there proceeded to Moradabad. Mahmud Khan was captured, however he died in prison after being sentenced for life. His property was confiscated as that of the others who fought against the British, the supporters of the British being rewarded.²¹⁹ Thus it was at the battle of Ambasut that **finally British regained their dominant status**, toppling the reign of Mahmud Shah. In spite of fighting between the Hindus and the Muslim Pashtuns, the Nawab succeeded in maintaining his position until 21 April 1858, when he was defeated by the British at Nagina.

After the rebellion subsided, misgovernance prevailed as again a series of famines severely affected this district in 1860-61 and 1868-69. This imbued a strong sense of anti-British sentiment to the struggle.

During the First World War, Bijnor came into prominence as a centre of political activity when Chandan Singh and Thakur Das, two prominent local leaders, launched a movement against free and involuntary transport of arms and ammunition by the Kisans of the district to the border district of Garhwal where one of the important military stations had been established at Lansdowne.²²⁰

In 1919 the Hindus and the Muslims of the district united against the infamous Rowlatt Act of 1919. This act gave vent to feelings of deep resentment and indignation and raised a storm of protest all over the district. Bijnor was also one of the leading centres during the national struggle for freedom.

In 1924, a big fair was held in this district by the District Board on the occasion of Ganga snan which also served as the platform for an organised Congress propaganda. The district magistrate took over the arrangement of the fair from the control of the District Board. In order to obstruct the attendance of the fair and to weaken the Congress hold, the district magistrate levied a tax on bullock carts coming to the fair; this led to a serious agitation followed by mass arrests even on women and the imposition of and realisation of oppressive fines. **Bijnor was also one of the most active centres during the Civil disobedience movement.** In October, 1940, when Mahatma Gandhi began Individual Satyagraha, many satyagrahis in Bijnor were selected from among the members of the district Congress committee and other eminent Congress leaders, including Govind Sahai and Hafiz Muhammad Ibrahim.

On August 12, 1942, the local students took out a large procession under the Quit India Movement and attacked thana and tehsil buildings and hoisted the tricolour on various

²¹⁸ Ibid, p.50

²¹⁹ Ibid, p. 51

²²⁰(Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Bijnor District, 1981), p. 51

government offices. The people also joined the students of Chandpur high school in the procession. On August 14, the processionists smashed the glass panes in the railway station. On August 16, the villagers of Phina, Tajpur and Gopalpur in police circle Nurpur, numbering about 15,000, marched in a procession to hoist the tricolour at the Nurpur police station. On their way they damaged everything that had a semblance of the colonial government. An armed police force was posted at Nurpur thana to meet them. Hardly did the procession reach Nurpur then the police made a lathi charge but the procession continued its march peacefully. As soon as it reached the thana, the police opened fire on it. Parvin Singh and Rikkhi Singh died, many were wounded and a lot more were arrested. An amount of Rs 6,000 was imposed as a collective fine. A huge fair held annually on August 16 at Nurpur (also called Noorpur) now commemorates the martyrs of this event.²²¹

It can thus be noted that Bijnor district has had a rich history of its own which has shaped and influenced the culture of this district. The Mughals, Nawabs, Rohils who ruled Bijnor from the early 18th century till the British rule, all heavily impacted the region and left a legacy of their own on the music, dance, literature, arts and crafts that majorly flourished under Mughal rule. The garments of Bijnor especially the Banarasi Sari and the Chikan work on kurtas portray the Mughal style of intricate and ornate decoration. The people of Bijnor, originally said to have belonged to Indo-Dravidian racial group, practised mainly Hinduism and Islam, as well as Sikhism, Christianity, Jainism and Buddhism. The people of this district primarily speak in Hindi and Urdu. As many as seven dialects of Hindi are spoken in the state.²²²

²²¹(Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Bijnor District, 1981, p. 55)

²²²(Culture in Binor)<https://www.bijnoronline.in/city-guide/culture-in-bijnor#:~:text=Culture%20of%20Bijnor%20is%20highly,flourished%20under%20the%20Mughal%20rule>

Important and Significant Places

'The city of Bijnor serves as a prominent pilgrimage destination in Uttar Pradesh for people from every major religion. This religious diversity began developing in the 18th century, as the city of Bijnor fell under the reign of many rulers, including the Mughals, the Nawabs and, finally, the British. Shrines, temples and churches of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism are littered throughout Bijnor. Most of these religious sites also hold appeal because of their classic architecture'.²²³

Bijnor with a rich repertoire of history that has left an indelible mark on the culture of its people reveals an intrinsic connection between the rich heritage of the district present in the towns of the district and the local traditions and legends that are woven around them.

Here is a **list of the remarkable places** and their heritage as well as the popular cultural traditions that persist and are made alive through the generations of people living in and around Bijnor district as noted by **Dangli Prasad Varun in his version of the UP Gazetteer. (Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers: Bijnor District, 1981)**

Afzalgarh

Afzalgarh is a city and a municipal board in Bijnor district in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. This place is said to have derived its name and origin from Afzal Khan, a Rohilla chief and brother of Zabita Khan, who founded the town between 1748 and 1774. He also built a brick fort, the ruins of which are to be seen on the northern outskirts. This particular place has attained considerable repute for its excellent cloth industry, particularly garha and gazi. The local Julahas still engage in the manufacture of cloth but the quality has deteriorated. Timber and bamboo are other products of commerce and trade.

Bashta

Bashta village is located in Chandpur Tehsil of **Bijnor** district in Uttar Pradesh. This place is associated with the name of Abul Fazl and Abul Faizi (the famous literati of Akbar's court). It is said that visitors from all over the district used to remove a brick each as a souvenir out of a structure located here which was presumed to represent the Madarsa where these learned brothers acquired their education. Akbar had established a big police post here which was responsible for maintaining law and order in 60 adjoining villages.

One of the most visited temples here is 'Sita Mandir Math', 'Sita Samahit temple' or the Temple of Sita, who is said to have performed the ordeal of performing the agnipariksha here,

²²³<https://bijnor.nic.in/places-of-interest/>

while some say that it is here that the earth tore apart and Sita went inside.²²⁴. It is widely considered to be a historical structure that is associated with the epic *Ramayana*. It is located along the Chandpur-Jalilpur road. Though there is a lack of any historical evidence, the local myths, legends and tradition attach a strong spiritual value to this place.



Sita Samahit temple in Bijnor.

Image source:<https://s3.india.com/travel/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Sita-samahit-temple.jpg>

Chandpur

A legend associates its name with one Chand Khan who is supposed to have founded this place in the pre-Mughal days. An old sand-stone tomb which still exists in this town is considered to be his tomb. This place had attained considerable importance during Akbar's days when it became the capital of a pargana and a dastur in the Sarkar of Sambhal. In the early days of British rule it was made the headquarters of a tehsil and remained as such till the reconstitution of the subdivision in 1894. The old tehsil building houses the police station.

²²⁴(Bijnor)<https://bharatdiscovery.org/india/%E0%A4%AC%E0%A4%BF%E0%A4%9C%E0%A4%A8%E0%A5%8C%E0%A4%B0>

In 1805 it was occupied by the Pindaris and again by Muslim freedom fighters in 1857. The dilapidated and ruined houses of the noble Saiyid families of this place are a reminder of the heroic fight which they offered against the British during the Freedom struggle of 1857.

This particular place has a mosque and a tomb of considerable antiquity. This place has been a flourishing business centre during the early part of the present century. Earthenware, ipc-bowls, water bottles and coarse cotton cloths known as garha and chauthai were the special manufactures. The town has 2 sugar factories, an ice factory and a unit dealing with handloom products.

Daranagar

This place is believed to have assumed its name from the word 'Dara' which in Sanskrit means 'women'. Legend has it that during the war at Kurukshetra, a great saint Vidur gave shelter to the widows of both the Kauravas and the Pandavas after the great war of Mahabharata and rehabilitated them around his ashram by virtue of which the place became to be known as Daranagar i.e. the town for women. Daranagar is noted for bathing fairs that take place after the coming of the rains and in the cold weather. The largest is in the month of Kartika during the full moon.



Daranagar, Source: Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daranagar>

'Daranagar was of historical importance during Mahabharata. When the war between Kauravas and Pandavas began, both sides wished to safeguard their wives and children under the protection of Vidur Kuti before starting the war. Since it required a large place to house

all the family members of the Kauravas and the Pandavas Vidur Kuti established an exclusive region which was called as Daranagar.²²⁵

Vidur kuti

This place is adjacent to Daranagar and according to tradition it is supposed to be the place where Vidur had his ashram and is situated on the eastern bank of the river Ganga. It is known to have great historical importance as it is believed to have been founded by the great saint Vidur, one of the noblest characters of the *Mahabharata* who was also a great scholar and statesman. It is said that he could foretell future happenings. He had access to the two contending parties, the Kauravas and the Pandavas and both Dhritrashtra and Yudhishtira consulted him on major issues.

It is here that the first President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, visited in 1960 and unveiled the statue of the saint. A year later the then Vice-president of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan, laid the foundation stone of the Bharat Mata Temple at the Kuti, consisting of a big hall and a library, the former being a venue for religious discourses and gatherings.



Vidur Kuti Temple, Source: Bijnor.nic



Vidur Kuti Temple, Source: Bijnor.nic, <https://bijnor.nic.in/tourist-place/rameshwar/>

²²⁵<https://bijnor.nic.in/tourist-place/bijnor/>

Dhampur

Dhanmpur marks the historic site where the Mughal forces under Qutub-ud-din Khan suffered a crushing defeat in the middle of the 18th century at the hands of Dunde Khan, the Rohilla chief. Subsequently, it was devastated by Amir Khan (a Pindari chief) during the early years of the 19th century. In 1844, it supplanted Sherkot as the headquarters of the pargana and tehsil, the change being made on account of its more central position and greater accessibility. In 1929, the people of Dhampur accorded a warm welcome to Mahatma Gandhi, who addressed a large gathering here, appealing to the people to join the civil disobedience movement, it being one of the leading centres of the freedom movement.

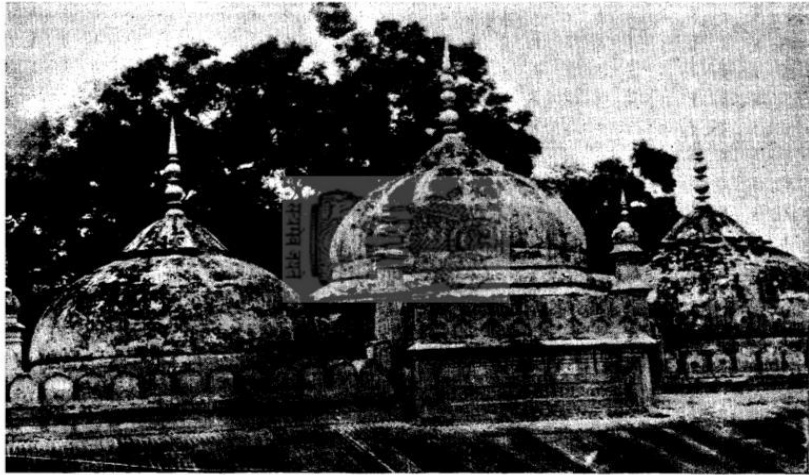
This place is known for its iron works. In the former days, Dhampur was famous for its gunsmiths and a local workman was awarded a prize for matchlocks at the Paris Exhibition of 1867.

Mandawar

Mandawar is an archaeological site of great importance. Even though a lot of it is still left to be explored, the archaeological remains hint at the site where sage Kanva established his ashram and brought up Shakuntala, the daughter of Vishwamitra.

St Martin and Cunningham have identified the place with Mo-ti-pu-lo of the Chinese traveller, Hieun Tsang, who visited this place in the seventh century and found that it was the capital of a Sudra kingdom. This town is famous for having the monastery of the Buddhist teacher Sungabhadra, who flourished here during the early days of the Christian era. His pupil, Vimal Mitra, was buried here in a mango grove close by on the western bank of the Malin. The samadhi still exists. This place is known to have been a stronghold of the Hinayana sect of Buddhism.

One of the many oldest existing structures found here is a raised mound to the southeast. In the middle of this mound is a ruined fort. In the south-east corner of the fort stands the Jama Masjid built of large blocks of grey sandstone that are probably the materials of an earlier desecrated Hindu temple. It is believed that this town was inhabited in the 12th century after a considerable period of decay, by people from Meerut whose descendants still inhabit the place. Tradition has it that it was included in the dominions of Prithvi Raj Chauhan of Delhi and it was only in 1198 that Shahab-ud-din Ghorî captured it. It was visited by Timur during his march to Delhi in 1398. This place was also sacked by Amir Khan, the Pindari leader, during the upheaval of 1857. The place also suffered a great deal at the Hands of the Jat marauders of the area.



Jama Masjid, Mandawar, Tahsil Bijnor

Jama Masjid, Source: (Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Bijnor District, 1981)

Nagina

Not much is known about the origin or the foundation of the town but it appears that it remained for the most part a Muslim base as the very name 'Nagina' is a Persian word, meaning jewel. It also appears to have had very little share in history till about the days of Akbar, when it gave its name to a pargana. It became an eminent centre during the Rohilla supremacy when its old fort and several of the elegant though small mosques were built. In 1805 it was sacked by the Pindaris under Amir Khan. The Jama Masjid, which is a conspicuous building on an elevated and well chosen site, was built around 1867. Nagina has been the headquarters of a tehsil since the beginning of British rule and in 1817 became the seat of the collector of northern Moradabad, the change to Bijnor taking place in 1824, one of the reasons being that the drainage of Nagina was somewhat deficient and malaria as an epidemic was recurrent. Several fierce conflicts took place here during the struggle of 1857.

The chief public buildings of Nagina comprise the old Pathan fort, in which the tehsil and registration offices are housed, the dispensary, a fine brick structure standing on a raised and open site in the south-eastern outskirts of the town.



The Pathan fort at Nagina, Source: Times of India,
<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/HiddenHeritage/when-monuments-go-missing/>

This place is one of the chief commercial centres in the district and a large trade is carried on in sugar, rice, cotton and other articles. It has long been celebrated for its iron work and in former days the matchlocks produced here had a wide reputation. However, it is wood-carving in ebony and manufacture of glass phials, used by pilgrims from all parts of India to carry the sacred water of the Ganga from Haridwar, that are the special and principal industries of this place. The glass used is of greenish brown colour and is made from an amalgam of *reh* and saltpetre. Garha and gazi are the two varieties of cloth manufactured here. Sunn Hemp bags and ropes, as well as lacquered and painted goods, are also produced here in small quantities.

Najibabad

It is here that the river Malini flows along the northeast outskirts of the city. This place is considered to be an important commercial centre. The principal articles of commerce are cloth, salt, sugar-cane, grain, sugar, timber and other forest produce, and other articles which are mostly exported to the hills, including vessels made of all kinds of metals, cotton cloth (both garha and gazi), blankets, shoes, other articles of domestic use and baskets woven from split bamboo.



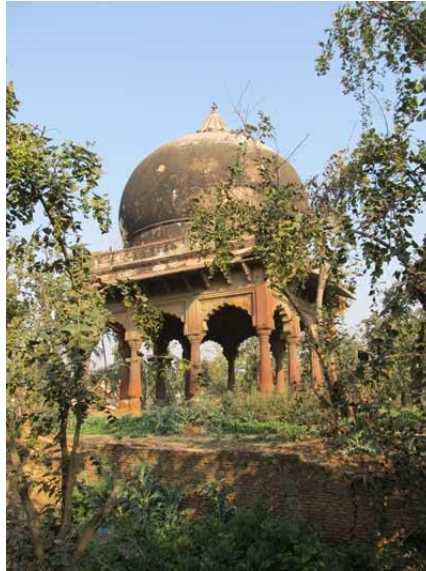
Najibabad Fort, Source: Bijnor.nic

The town was founded in the days of the Rohilla occupation and it is named after Najib-ud-daulah, who made it the headquarters instead of Jalalabad. In 1755 he built the great fort of Pathargarh or Najafgarh which is now in ruins. Constructed of brick and stone, it is believed that it was made from the debris of the ancient castle of Mordhwaj. It was a square building and was surrounded by an embattled wall, with bastions at each angle end gateways on each side, the chief gate opening towards the town. This fort is known to have witnessed a lot. Jhanga Rao Sindhia and Malhar Rao Maratha are said to have looted the fort as well as this city during the third battle of Panipat. This fort subsequently was again made the target during the reign of Najaf Khan. Following this it was brought under the rein of Shuja-ud-Daulah in 1774 and then finally under the British in 1801.



Pathargarh Fort on the outskirts of Najibabad,
Source: Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Najib_ad-Dawlah

The tomb of Njib-ud-daulah stands to the south of the town and to the north is that of his brother, Jahengir Khan, which was constructed in 1806. Opposite the gateway are the remains of the Nawab's Naubat khana. A spacious building known as Kothi Mubarak Bunyad stands to the northeast. In the Nawab-tola there is an old baradari, which is now in ruins.



Najib ud Daulah's tomb, Source: Times of India,
<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/HiddenHeritage/when-monuments-go-missing/>

This town was sacked by the Marathas in 1772 and in 1774 and eventually it passed into the hands of Shuja-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Avadh after which its importance declined. Nawab Muin-ud-din Khan took up his residence here. His son, Mahmud Khan, took a very active part in the 1857 freedom struggle and the town passed out of British hands. It was reoccupied by the British a year later, the palace of the Nawab was destroyed and the town was plundered. After the advent of British rule the only schools were maktabas and pathshalas. The first institution started on western lines was the Bullock school which was founded in July, 1892.

In **Jogirampuri near Najibabad**, there is a famous shrine, popularly known as **Najaf-i-Hind of Saiyid Raju** who was a distinguished Diwan to whom the Emperor Shah Jahan had presented the jagir of Jogirampur, inheriting what his father Syed Allaudin Bukhari had. He was held in great reverence in the Mughal court. Syed Raju was counted as one of the most learned empiricists besides being pious and devout.²²⁶ A dargah dedicated to him was built during Aurangzeb's reign. This dargah is one of the holiest places for Shia Muslims in India, although it attracts a large number of people from other religions too, and from every corner of India, in the last week of May every year, when religious discourses (majlises) are organised in the

²²⁶(Bijnor Tourism)<https://bijnor.nic.in/tourism/>

hall of the shrine. It is also believed that the water from the fountain near the shrine cures many ailments, particularly those of the stomach and the skin.



Dargah-e-Aaliya-Najaf-e-Hind, Source: Bijnor.nic, <https://bijnor.nic.in/tourist-place/bhubaneswar/>

Nihtaur

This place is known to have gained considerable importance during the reign of Akbar when it became the headquarters of a pargana. It has an old mosque with three fluted domes dating back to the times of Akbar.

Sherkot

Sherkot derives its name from Sher Shah and this place was made the headquarters of a pargana during his reign and remained so during the reign of Akbar. The history of this place remained almost obscure till 1805, when it was besieged and sacked by Amir Khan Pindari. Subsequently it lost much of its importance as in 1844 the pargana and tehsil headquarters were removed to Dhampur. Sherkot is an old settlement of the family of Chauhan Rajputs. The palatial house of the Chauhans, with two temples attached, stands just outside the town to the northwest. A certain part of the town is known as Qazi Sarai and derives its name from a well known family of Sheikhs, who held the office of qazi under the Mughals.

Tajpur

Around the beginning of the 18th century, Balram Singh of the Taga Family had acquired large estates in the Azampur portion of pargana Bashta. His descendant, Jagat Singli, was given the title of Raja by the British. He died in 1885 leaving his brother Sham Singh who embraced Christianity and married an English woman on whose death he built a beautiful church on the Seohara-Nurpur road in her memory. The Tajpur church, also known as the Sacred Heart Church, is a Roman Catholic Church known for its beauty and grandeur. It is situated such that at sunset when the sun's rays fall on it, the statue of Christ in the church looks as if it is made of gold.



Sacred Heart Church, Tajpur

Source: Jagran.com, <https://www.jagran.com/uttar-pradesh/bijnor-10326232.html>

‘Mandawar ka Mahal’

Another fascinating site near this district is the ‘Mandawar ka Mahal’. ‘It is said that Queen Victoria of England was taught both Urdu and Farsi by Munshi Ali. Hence, Queen Victoria constructed the ‘Mandawar ka Mahal’ in 1850 and gifted it to Munshi Ali. About 8 kilometers from this Mahal **on the Mandawar Blawali Road** close to village Kundanpur there exists a famous temple called **Galkha Devi**. It is believed that Rukmani came here to worship and Lord Krishna kidnapped her’.²²⁷



Mandawar Mahal

Image: <https://www.nativeplanet.com/moradabad/mandawar-ka-mahal/photos/19304/>

²²⁷ <http://lalitrablog.blogspot.com/2012/11/some-attractive-places-in-district.html>

Other prominent temples in the Bijnor city include **Radha Krishna Mandir, Panchmukhi Mandir, Shiv Mandir and Chamunda Mandir.**

Ganj is situated along the banks of the river Ganges, about 12 km from the town of Bijnor. This place is known for numerous ancient ashrams and temples near the river.

The Mosques or Muslim worship sites in the district reflect the architectural tastes of the long-gone royalty of the Mughals and Nawabs that ruled here. 'Jama Masjid, Teli Wali Masjid, Hadishah, Markaz Masjid and Bahar Wali Masjid are some of the well-preserved mosques in Bijnor'.²²⁸

²²⁸ <https://bijnor.nic.in/places-of-interest/>

Art and Craft Traditions

When the whole of Rohilkhand came into the possession of Shuja-ud-daulah, it is believed that under his rule Najibabad became a flourishing centre of the cotton industry. 'A variety of cotton and silk products were then transported by land to Surat and Calcutta and from there shipped to Persia, East Asia and Europe'.²²⁹

In Afzalganj, Bijnor, according to the Gazetteer written in 1981, the local Julahas still engaged in the manufacture of cloth but the quality had deteriorated. Timber and bamboo were other products of commerce and trade.

In Bijnor district, a small town with a big name, Nagina stands tall worldwide for the quality and design of its woodcrafts. The town has a rural ambience, its narrow streets filled with small units of wood workshops. The products created here are produced on a small scale with a creative human touch, providing a fine blend of utility and aesthetics. Nagina's outstanding wood carving craft tradition dates back to the Mughal era. It is believed that some of the wood carvers moved from Iran to Uttar Pradesh and settled in Nagina and nearby villages, where Indian rosewood was readily available. People from Multan form one such community which has been associated with this craft for generations but today this craft isn't limited to a single community. Women also contribute actively to the craft and are happy to have their children help them after school, indirectly passing on skills to the next generation.²³⁰

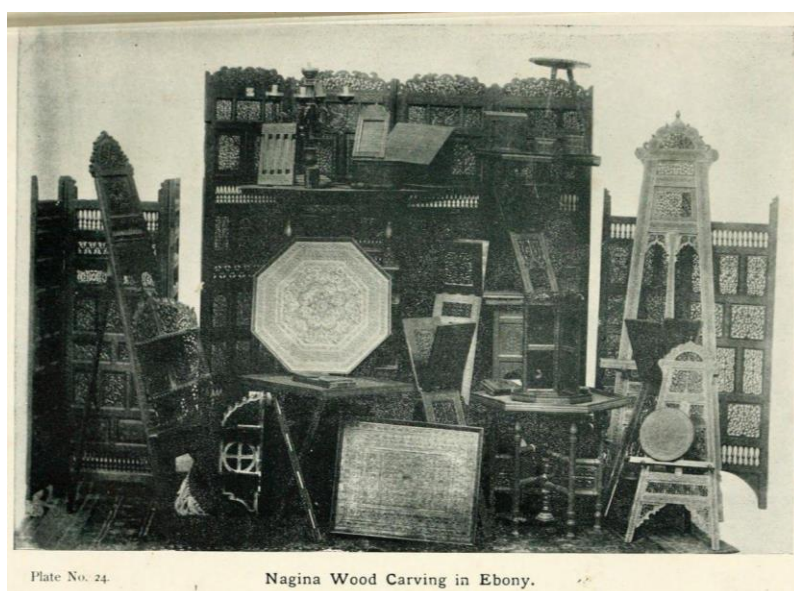


Plate No. 24.

Nagina Wood Carving in Ebony.

Source: Indian art at Delhi 1903 by George Watt

²²⁹ Varun, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers : Bijnor District

²³⁰ Dastkari Haat Samiti, Google Arts and Culture

Ebony carving of Nagina is the most celebrated industry of Bijnor district, introduced 2 centuries ago from Multan although there was also a reputation of a metal industry (mainly weapons) in Nagina, Najibabad, and Dhampur.

The major production of Glass vessels is also a noteworthy industry at Nagina and Najibabad; small glass phials used to carry Ganga water from Haridwar are exported from here.²³¹ The glass makers of the district were remarkable for being the only craftsmen in the state who could make bottles of moulded glass. The glass is of a greenish-brown colour and is made from an amalgam of reh and saltpetre. Najibabad was also known for its bamboo baskets and Mandawar specialized in papier mache goods. In former days, Dhampur was famed for its gunsmiths and a local workman obtained a prize for matchlocks at the Paris exhibition of 1867.



Wood workshop in Nagina. Source: National Centre for Design and Product Development.

The finest varieties of cotton come from Afzalgarh in Bijnor; a weaver from that place obtained a silver medal and prize at the Agra Exhibition in 1867. The best cotton printing is done in the village of Nihtaur. Carpets and bedspreads of Sherkot village have a local reputation. Chikan embroidery is also practiced by the craft clusters in Bijnor.

Nagina, Najibabad, Chandpur, Sahaspur, Afzalgarh and Dara Nagar were celebrated centers for the manufacture of Garha and Gazi, two common varieties of cloth. The cross-lined pattern of red and white woven cloth known as Chauthai was produced at Chandpur; a

²³¹ Nevill. H.R. 1908. District Gazetteer of Bijnor. Allahabad: Government Press., vol. XIV, p.67,p.232

novelty among textiles.²³² The special manufactures of Chandpur also include earthenware pipe-bowls.

Knives and cutlery made in the suburb of Bukhara are a specialty of the town, along with 'Janeos' or sacred threads worn by Brahmans and Chhattris, which are exported to many parts of the provinces.

Nagina is the word for 'jewel'; it was named by Syeds who received this place as jagir by the Mughals. Syed Ghalib Ali received this place as Jagir and he founded the city by building Nagina Mahal or Bara Mahal. The *Ain-e-Akbari* mentions the city as the headquarters of Nagina Mahal (Bara Mahal) currently located at Mohalla-SyedWara Nagina or pargana. During the British period, it remained the headquarters of Nagina Tehsil, Bijnor district, in the United Province; and from 1817–1824, it was the headquarters of the newly formed Northern Moradabad district. In 1901, the Nagina Tehsil had 464 villages and two towns: Nagina, with a population of 21,412, and Afzalgarh, with a population of 6,474.²³³ It is one of the important wood carving centers in Uttar Pradesh. This town, known throughout the world as 'wood crafts city,' produces wooden handicrafts of international standards.

The history of the wood crafts industry of Nagina is about 500 years old. The town is mostly inhabited by Multani people who originally hailed from Pakistan. The curious wooden items manufactured by these people have been admired and encouraged from the Mughal period.²³⁴ Of the wooden items, walking sticks, exclusive brass inlay and wooden inlay boxes and engravings are very popular.

The woodwork traditions in Nagina, Bijnor, find a mention as far back as 1881 when The Imperial Gazetteer of India, a historical reference work was first published in 1881 under the aegis of the British Empire. "Nagina is celebrated for the excellent workmanship of its carved ebony wares, such as walking-sticks, trays, boxes, which are frequently inlaid with ivory. Large quantities of small glass phials are blown here and exported to Haridwar for the pilgrims who carry Ganges water in them."²³⁵

There is an interesting story about the origins of woodcarving in Nagina. Originally the craftsmen used to carve on the steel section of guns. After the 1857 uprising against the British, manufacture of arms was prohibited.²³⁶ The metal workers transferred their skills to carving on a hard wood and they chose ebony. Their style of carving retained the precision originally needed for carving on metal.

²³² Census of India 2001, District Census Handbook Bijnor, Directorate of Census Operations, Uttar Pradesh p.7, p.137

²³³ "History," *Nagina*, accessed January 29, 2021.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ "Woodwork City of Nagina," *Lalit Rana's Blog*, accessed January 29, 2021.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*



Image Source: One District One Product, Government of Uttar Pradesh (<http://www.odopup.in/en/article/bijnor>).



Image Source: One District One Product, Government of Uttar Pradesh (<http://www.odopup.in/en/article/bijnor>).



Image Source: Lalit Rana's Blog (<https://lalitrana.blogspot.com/2013/03/nagina-woodwork-city-unseen-city-of.html>).

TARKASHI

Another form of craft which is widely practiced in this region is Tarkashi or the metal inlay work. In this technique, fine wire like strips of brass, copper or silver is inlaid into wood. Typically, dark coloured and seasoned sheesham wood is used as its high oil content allows the inlaid metal to be held securely. The patterns are usually geometric forms or florals of Mughal inspiration.²³⁷ A small pocket of craftsmen in Nagina and Bijnor specialize in carving ornamental combs and trinket boxes from ebony. The combs are made in pairs, male and female. The male combs, 'raja ki kangji', have teeth on one side and the female combs, 'rani ki kangji', have teeth on both sides.

The word *tarkashi* implies the careful inlay of brass, copper or silver wire in wood, forming a soft filigree. The core word is *taar*, or wire. The districts of Saharanpur, Nagina, Bijnor and Mainpuri form the cornerstone of Tarkashi in the country. The artisans there will tell you that the craft originated in the late nineteenth century, as a tool to carve *khadauns*, or wooden footwear, for pious Hindu priests who considered leather unholy. Now, however, Tarkashi techniques are used to create home décor items like tabletops, trays and coasters.²³⁸

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ India Kala. "From Kathputlis to Meenakari to Warli Art - The Story of Indian Handicrafts." *The Better India*, June 09, 2016.

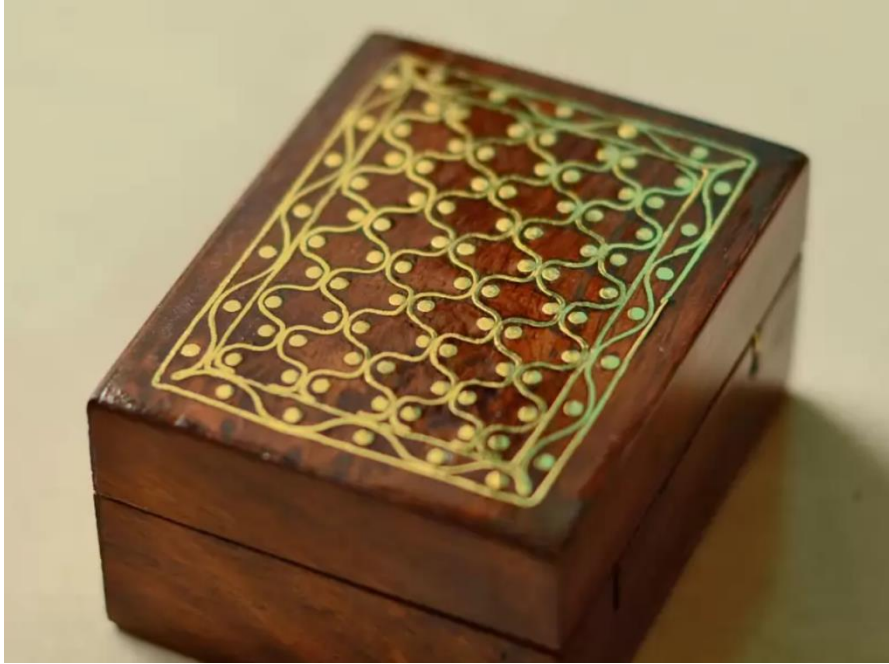


Image Source: Gaatha (<https://shop.gaatha.com/Buy-tarkashi-products-5>).



Image Source: Gaatha (<https://shop.gaatha.com/Buy-tarkashi-products-5>).



Image Source: Pinterest (<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/266345765434959483/>).



Image Source: Pinterest (<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/266345765434959484/>).



Collage Source: Pinterest (<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/246923992088716931/>).

Festivals and Fairs

About 30 Hindu religious fairs are held annually in different places of the district. Krishna Lila is performed in every town and big village of the district. Similarly, Muslims celebrate almost all the important festivals. The largest fair in Bijnor is held at Daranagar and Goela, an adjoining village at the point where the Ganga first becomes navigable, and 25,000 people assemble for bathing in it on the full moon of Kartik month. There is a holy temple of Hindus dedicated to Chandi Devi, the patron deity of Bijnor.

A fair is held in the honour of Burha Babu who is said to be an incarnation of Brahma and special patron of women and children.²³⁹ As per the Gazetteer of 1908, the few good horses in Bijnor are in the possession of the leading Zamindars who obtain them from the annual Nauchandi fair in Meerut where artistic and religious rituals are followed. Nauchandi fair can be traced back to 1672, when it was held as a one day celebration for cattle traders.²⁴⁰

There is a celebrated temple of Bithoor but the pilgrims at the fair seldom come from beyond the limits of the district. During the Dwapar era, the temple is mentioned as one of the residential premises of the 'Chachashri', Mahatma Bithoor of Kauravas and Pandavas situated on the bank of the river Ganga.

Zahir Diwan, a local saint is known as Gogapeer in the district.²⁴¹

The Urs festival which commemorates the death anniversary of Sufi Saint Moinuddin Chisti is celebrated by thousands in Najibabad, Hasanpur, and Sahaspur.²⁴² A small fair takes place at Salabatnagar, Afzalgarh during March in the honour of Bale Sarkar. Another gathering is held in March under the name of Chhipis' fair.

In Charthawal, Muzaffarnagar, many fairs are held every year. One of these is known as the fair of Chhariyan, which takes place during the month of Bhadra. Chhariyan is devoted to Saint Goga Pir, and is attended by about five thousand people.²⁴³ In Bijnor as well, there is a tradition related to Goga Pir.

²³⁹ Nevill. H.R. 1908. District Gazetteer of Bijnor. Allahabad: Government Press., vol. XIV, p.79

²⁴⁰ Nevill. H.R. 1908. District Gazetteer of Bijnor. Allahabad: Government Press., vol. XIV p.32

²⁴¹ Census of India 2001, District Census Handbook Bijnor, Directorate of Census Operations, Uttar Pradesh p.58

²⁴² Census of India 1961 V. XV, Fairs and Festivals in Uttar Pradesh, P.P. Bhatnagar, Superintendent of Census Operations Uttar Pradesh

²⁴³ Varun, Dangli Prasad. *Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers: Muzaffarnagar*. Government Press, Rampur, 1990: page 275.



Dargahe Aaliya Najaf-e-Hind, Jogipura, Source: Wikimedia Commons

The Ramlila is observed by a considerable number of Hindus, especially in Dhampur. Nautanki is a highly entertaining musical play of western Uttar Pradesh. Ramlila, Nautanki, and Rasiya folk music of the Braj region enthral thousands of men and women in the fairs and gatherings.²⁴⁴ The famous Nijab-ud-Daulah's fort in Najibabad popularly called as the "Gateway of Himalayas" was addressed as Sultana Dakoo's shelter by the English East India Company. This has inspired a locally famous nautanki called *Sultana Dakoo*.



Sultana Daku arrested by a team of police officers led by Freddie Young. Source: BBC Hindi

²⁴⁴ Manorama Sharma, *Musical Heritage of India*, APH Publishing 2007 p.35

More than 800 from the minority community make hay during the week-long Kartik Purnima fair in UP's Bijnor every year, notwithstanding the religious divide. Ranging from flower sellers to balloon sellers and barbers, they fan out there along the sandy banks of the sacred Ganga River in Vidur Kuti and help run the show smoothly.²⁴⁵ Lakhs of pilgrims visit the fair and take a dip in the cold water of the sacred river to wash their sins, apart from performing other rituals on Kartik Purnima, which also includes tonsuring of kids, known as 'mundan'.

In an interview with The Times of India, Shyam Bahadur Sharma (Apar Mukhya Adhikari of the district Panchayat) said, "Over 800 Muslim vendors, barbers and labourers are working in the fair this time. They are catering to lakhs of pilgrims. The man who supervised the fair arrangement is also from the Muslim community. Their cooperation is invaluable."²⁴⁶

Ali Hasan, who is a toy seller, in the same interview commented, "I am from nearby Mandawar town. These fairs do not belong to any community or caste. They are of all communities."²⁴⁷

Kareem, a barber from Nizamapura village, told TOI: "Ganga fair brings a big opportunity for the barber community. Pilgrims come here on the banks of the river to shave their kid's heads. On this occasion, people gladly give us money."²⁴⁸

Devotees in 2017 said that there was not enough water for Ganga snan in Bijnor. With only 12,000 cusec water, the drop in the water level was attributed to the change in the course of the river, which had deviated towards Hastinapur. TOI's sources claimed that the flow of water in the river has declined as it was being released into canals for irrigation purposes. This was also the first year when the Ganga Snan fair was available online too; the clips were uploaded on the site of the district panchayat.²⁴⁹

However, two years later in 2019, more than 10 lakh devotees took a holy dip in the river Ganga. The river enters UP in Bijnor's Balawali village. Several fairs are organised on its banks at various locations including Balawali, Ravali, Ganga barrage, Vidurkuti and Jalilpur. The biggest fair of them all happens at Vidurkuti, a place of religious and historical significance. Over 4 lakh devotees took a holy dip there.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁵ Dabas, Harveer. "Bijnor's Ganga fair, where story of communal camaraderie unfolds every year." *The Times of India*, November 12, 2019.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Dabas, Harveer. "Devotees say not enough water for Ganga snan in Bijnor." *The Times of India*, October 27, 2017.

²⁵⁰ Dabas, Harveer. "Over 10 lakh take holy dip in Ganga on Kartik Purnima." *The Times of India*, November 13, 2019.

People and Language of Bijnor District

According to the district gazetteer of Bijnor, the Gurukul at Kangri, which is presently located in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, was initially situated in Najibabad pargana of Bijnor as a notable boy's institution maintained by the Aryas. It was founded with the objective of reviving the ancient system of teaching embracing Hindu philosophy, science, art, and modern subjects, and also as a centre for the various movements launched by the Indian National Congress in the district.²⁵¹

As far as the people are concerned, the bulk of Kayasthas in Bijnor district follow their traditional calling as patwaris or village accountants. The Tagas of Tajpur are the only titled, formerly royal family of the region. Another well-known family is of the Chauhans of Haldaur, Sherkot, Sahaspur and Seohara who claim to have been settled here since the days of the Musalman conquest. While the Raja of Kashipur and Gujar rani of Landhaura are not residents, they are among the top landholders of the district.

Interestingly, the people of Bijnor were far more highly taxed in Akbar's reign than in the twentieth century.²⁵²

There is no other district in the United Provinces, in which Urdu is more widely spoken, both by the peasants and the educated classes. According to the district gazetteer of Bijnor (1908), while no attempt has been made to foster indigenous arts and letters, Bijnor boasted of a few local newspapers and weeklies of little influence such as Qulqul, Sahifa, and Tohfa-i-Hind. There was a weekly journal dealing with legal matters known as Risala Taza Nazair and a monthly magazine called Zamindarwa Kashikar which dealt with agricultural questions. Local news was published in the **Upkar of Nagina**, which was a free newspaper. The newspapers had for the most part a precarious existence and a very limited circulation; they contained local news, excerpts from other papers and discussed social, religious, and political matters.²⁵³

²⁵¹ Directorate of Census Operations, District Census Handbook, Haridwar, p.19

²⁵² Nevill.H.R. 1908. District Gazetteer of Bijnor. Allahabad: Government Press., vol. XIV, p.184

²⁵³ Nevill.H.R. 1908. District Gazetteer of Bijnor. Allahabad: Government Press., vol. XIV p.113, 119, 120

5. The *Zamindār-wa-Kāshtkār* (Bijnor), for December, complains that under a recent ruling of the Board of Revenue of the United Provinces, there has been a wholesale rejection of notices of ejectment served on tenants, under section 36 of Act XII of 1881, which has caused great dismay and consternation among the land-owning classes, especially in view of the new Tenancy Act. It is true that Government's sympathies lean towards the cultivators; but the authorities should not overshoot the mark, and thereby create doubts in the minds of landowners and affect their confidence in British justice, which is objectionable on political grounds. If a landholder applies for the service of a notice of ejectment in proper time, but the court, through its negligence or any other cause, does not serve it within time, why should the zamindār suffer for the fault of the court? Some time ago the Board of Revenue issued a circular to the effect that when a court is responsible for the delay in the execution of a decree, the Law of Limitation will not apply. It is to be hoped that Government will take the subject into consideration and do justice to the landholders.

ZAMINDAR-WA-KASHTKAR, December, 1901.

SAHIFA, 10th December, 1901.

14. The *Sahifa* (Bijnor), of the 19th December, referring to the overcrowding of third class railway carriages and the want of intermediate class carriages in some trains, passengers, strongly protests against this inhuman treatment of natives. Whenever there is a great rush of third class native passengers at a railway station, they are thrust into carriages as if they were stocks and stones, and could be packed as such. Properly speaking, even ten passengers cannot conveniently be accommodated into a compartment, and this number should be reduced; but extremely trying indeed is the condition of passengers when more than ten of them are forcibly pushed into a compartment. A passenger who has to travel but a short distance can put up with this inconvenience; but the sufferings of those passengers who have to make long journeys, may be easily imagined. No intermediate class carriages are to be found in certain trains, and consequently those passengers who have bought intermediate class tickets are *volens volens* obliged to travel third class in overcrowded carriages. The authorities are well aware of the overcrowding of third class carriages, and reserve some third class compartments for third class European passengers in consequence, to save them from inconvenience; but no such consideration is shown even to those natives who hold the intermediate class tickets, but have to travel third class for want of an intermediate class carriage. The writer does not contend that no distinction of colour should be made, but that all native passengers should not be treated indiscriminately.

SAHIFA, 10th December, 1901.

15. The *Sahifa* (Bijnor), of the 19th December, complains that while the rupees issued in 1840 are still declared to be legal tender by Government, the booking clerks at the railway stations refuse to accept them in payment of fares. Maulana Muhammad Saïd, Manager of the Saulatia School (at Mecca), who lately had occasion to travel in this country, made this complaint. The editor himself offered a rupee of 1840 in payment of his fare at the Roorkee railway station the other day, and it was refused: fortunately he had rupees of other issues with him at the time, otherwise he would have been put to considerable inconvenience. Government would do well to give a good wiggling to those wilful booking clerks, who unnecessarily harass passengers in this way.

Ganga Related Rituals

In the district of Bijnor, **Makar Sankranti** is celebrated on the 14th of January every year. Unlike most Hindu festivals which are determined according to the altering positions of the Moon and are based on the Lunar Calendar, this festival is based on the Solar Calendar. It is customary to feast on 'Til-Gur' and enjoy a joyous session of kite-flying. On this occasion, generally, people belonging to different castes and cultures prefer taking a dip in holy water to mark the auspiciousness of this festival.²⁵⁴

Ganga Saptami is also celebrated widely in Bijnor.²⁵⁵ It is also known as Ganga Pujan or Ganga Jayanti. It is believed that on this day the holy river Ganga descended onto the earth. This day falls on the seventh day of the Shukla Paksha in Vaisakha month. River Ganges is considered to be the most holy and sacred river in India. This festival is mainly celebrated in the places the river Ganga and its tributaries flow. On this day devotees take a holy dip in the Ganges. It is considered to be highly auspicious. People worship Goddess Ganga and offer several pujas and rituals on this day. Ganga Aarti is held at several ghats of the Ganges. Ganga Shobha Yatra is organized at various ghats and many people take part in it. Devotees perform deepdan as well.



Image Source: Festivals of India (<https://www.festivalsofindia.in/ganga-saptami/>).

²⁵⁴ "Makar Sankranti 2021," *Panchang*, accessed February 06, 2021.

²⁵⁵ "Ganga Saptami 2021," *Festivals of India*, accessed February 06, 2021.

In popular folklore, there is a narrative about the rebirth of Ganga.²⁵⁶ King Sagara was the ruler of the kingdom of Kosala. He belonged to the Surya Dynasty and performed a hundred Ashwamedha Yagnas. If he could successfully complete the hundredth yagna, he would become the king of Swargaloka. Indra, the king of heaven, did not want this to happen. In order to make his position secure, he had stolen the sacrificial horse of the hundredth Yagna and hidden it in the ashram of Sage Kapila. The sons of Sagara then set out in search of the horse and finally could find it in sage Kapila's ashram. They mistook him to be the culprit and waged a war against him. It is said that the sage became furious and cursed them all and burnt them to ashes.

Meanwhile, generations passed in the dynasty; one person among them was Bhagiratha. By the time he ascended the throne, there were many disturbances in Kosala. He thought that these were due to the multiplication of his forefathers' sins and wanted to do penance for their sins. This could be done only through River Ganga which is sacred. It is said that he then went to the Himalayas and prayed for a thousand years to please Lord Brahma. Lord Brahma appeared in front of the king and promised him that Goddess Ganga will be sent to earth as he wished. But when she would descend, she would have a strong flow and would destroy the whole earth.

Hence, Lord Brahma asked the king to please Lord Shiva who could control the river's force. This time the king did tapasya for Lord Shiva for a year and finally Lord Shiva agreed to help him. He opened his hair and tied Ganga when she was falling from heaven. This day came to be celebrated as Ganga Saptami Day. Lord Shiva let only a part of her to flow through the Himalayas. Ganga which came to earth due to king Bhagiratha's efforts is also known as Bhagirathi. From the Himalayas she continued her journey and reached sage Kapil's ashram and flowed over the ashes of sixty thousand princes. Then they all attained Moksha and this day is considered as Ganga Dussehra.²⁵⁷

During Ganga Dussehra, River Ganga is worshiped like a Goddess and it is believed that it was the tenth day of Jyeshtha bright half when she descended on earth from heaven. On this day, after a lot of hard work and penance, Bhagirath, a Suryavanshi king, got success to bring down the river to earth. Since then, every year the occasion of **Ganga Dussehra** is celebrated by performing several rites and rituals of Ganga pooja to commemorate her.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ "Ganga Dussehra 2021," *Festivals of India*, accessed February 06, 2021.



Image Source: Festivals of India (<https://www.festivalsofindia.in/ganga/>).

If it is not possible to take bath in Ganga on Ganga Dussehra, people pray at some other river or reservoir or with pure water at home as per their convenience. After that, they perform puja in front of the idol of Ganga. The idol of Ganga is considered as Trinetra, quadrilateral, adorned with white clothes and white lotus. King Bhagirath and Himalaya are also worshipped. Lord Shiva is the prime deity to be worshipped during the Ganga Pooja as he is sole owner and holder of river Ganga and by grace of his mercy sent the river on earth for the welfare of mankind. The donation of ten edible items (mainly fruits and black sesame seeds) are considered to be the most auspicious.²⁵⁹

Purnima means the full moon day and the full moon that falls on Kartik month is known as Kartik Purnima. It is also known as Tripuri Purnima or Tripurari Purnima and is one of the most significant days in the traditional calendar. Kartik Purnima is celebrated as the birth anniversary of Vrinda, personification of the Tulsi plant. It is considered appropriate to take a dip in the sacred Ganga River, or 'ganga snan'.²⁶⁰ Vaikunth Chaturdashi Puja is performed one day prior to Kartik Purnima. Shiva temples on this day perform special Puja where Lord Vishnu is worshipped along with Lord Shiva. It is on this day that devotees observe the Kartik Purnima Ganga Snan by taking a dip in the holy Ganga.

Dev Diwali, commonly known as Diwali of Gods, is celebrated on the day of Kartik Purnima. Ancient Hindu scriptures describe that the Tripurasura demon was killed by Lord Shiva on this

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ "Kartik Purnima," *Panchang*, accessed February 06, 2021.

day, and this is the reason that Kartik Purnima is also known as Tripurari Purnima in Marathi. Legends describe that Gods were overjoyed with the death of Tripurasura and hence celebrated Kartik Purnima just like Diwali, by lighting earthen diyas in all the temples and at the banks of the river Ganga. Akashdeep, Mundan, Deepdaan and Annadaan are performed at Shukla Paksh Ekadashi. These rituals take place during the Kartik Purnima fair.²⁶¹ The river Ganga is illuminated with diyas, aarti also takes place, and many devotees make donations to the poor.

The largest fair in Bijnor is held at Daranagar and Goela, an adjoining village at the point where the Ganga first becomes navigable and 25,000 people assemble for bathing in it on the full moon of Kartik month. There is a holy temple of Hindus dedicated to Chandi Devi, the patron deity of the Bijnor.²⁶²

In December, 2020, a large number of devotees took a holy dip in the Ganga on the occasion of Ganga Snan in Bijnor, even as the district administration had cancelled the famous mela to check the spread of the deadly coronavirus.²⁶³ The cancellation of the fair hit local vendors and traders badly.

Though the administration had prohibited the Ganga Snan fair, permission was granted to bereaved families to perform 'deepdaan' and other rituals. They prayed for the salvation of the departed souls. Meanwhile, devotees also went to the Ganga banks at Vidur Kuti, Ganga barrage, Balawali, Ravali and Jaleelpur in the Bijnor district to perform 'mundan'.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Unable to trace the original source. Information taken from the Document which was sent for the calendar of events (there, too, source is not mentioned).

²⁶³ Dabas, Harveer. "Thousands take holy dip in Ganga in Bijnor." *The Times of India*, December 01, 2020.



Image Source: The Times of India (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/meerut/thousands-take-holy-dip-in-ganga-in-bijnor/articleshow/79496773.cms>).

Reported as recently as on 31st January, 2021, the Uttar Pradesh government plans to begin Ganga aartis at 1100 sites along the river course between Bijnor and Ballia to boost religious tourism, connect citizens with the Clean Ganga campaign and turn it into a people's movement. Neha Lalchandani reported that the government spokesperson believes this would be a cultural and spiritual inspiration for youth and would help strengthen their bonds with the Ganga.²⁶⁴

The department of Namami Gange has identified 1038 villages along both sides of the river in a 200 kilometre stretch, where the tourism department will create new platforms for performing aarti, a major draw at Kashi's Dasaswamedh ghat.²⁶⁵ These sites will be managed in collaboration with residents and the ritual will be performed at a scheduled time every day. The spokesperson of the state government said that these ghats will be constructed in all 1038 villages and would be developed as religious sites of their own.

²⁶⁴ Lalchandani, Neha. "Soon, Ganga aartis from Bijnor to Ballia at 1,100 sites along river." *The Times of India*, January 31, 2021.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.



Image Source: The Times of India (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/lucknow/soon-ganga-aartis-from-bijnor-to-ballia-at-1100-sites-along-river/articleshow/80607613.cms>).

The first point of the 'aarti' will be at Bijnor, where the Ganga enters Uttar Pradesh and ends at the last village in Ballia, the far-east district touching Bihar. The Jal Shakti Department issued directions to various departments in December to develop ancient and historical religious sites and temples in these villages as well as promote them as tourist spots.²⁶⁶ Additionally, as part of the Clean Ganga Programme, the government will develop sewage treatment plants in 14 districts. Once completed, UP will have 41 districts with sewage treatment plants (STP).

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

Foodways

'People of Bijnor give a lot of importance to the food they eat. Wheat is the staple food of the people so the daily meals have chappatis or puris. People enjoy both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food in Bijnor. Sweets play an important role in the food habits of Bijnor, daily meals are accompanied by a sweet dish and it is also given as an offering in pujas and prayers. Enormous quantities of sweets are made during festivals and functions. Sweets are also given as prasad after pujas. Drinks enjoyed by Bijnor people are lassi, sharbats, raita and chaas. The people of Bijnor also enjoy food products from restaurants, bakeries and confectionery shops.'²⁶⁷

According to the District Gazetteer of Bijnor (1908), the agricultural year is divided into the three generally recognised portions by the harvests which here go by the usual names of kharif, rabi and zaid or intermediate. The last is of very little importance in this district, as during the five years ending in 1906 the average area occupied by zaid crops was only 2,709 acres, so that this harvest may practically be neglected. Of the others, the kharif or autumn harvest assumes by far the more prominent position, largely exceeding the rabi in point of area throughout the district, with the single exception of pargana Barhapura, where the acreage in either case is approximately equal.²⁶⁸

Rice, Sugarcane, millets, Bajra, Maize, Wheat, Barley, Gram, Tobacco and oilseeds are some of the crops mentioned in the Gazetteer that have been grown since ages in the district.

As per the Gazetteer written in 1908, the major staple crops changed dramatically in the years before 1908; of the rabi crops, barley and gram have almost disappeared before the advance of wheat, largely high yielding varieties (Figure 1); of the kharif crops, rice and especially sugarcane (the major cash-crop) have supplanted bajra and pulses (Figure 2).²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ (<https://www.bijnoronline.in/city-guide/food-in-bijnor>)

²⁶⁸ Nevill, H. R. *Bijnor: A Gazetteer, Being Volume XIV of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*. Government Press, 1908: page 46.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

FIGURE 1: CROPPING PATTERNS IN BIJNOR TAHSIL
RABI (WINTER CROPS) (in per cent)

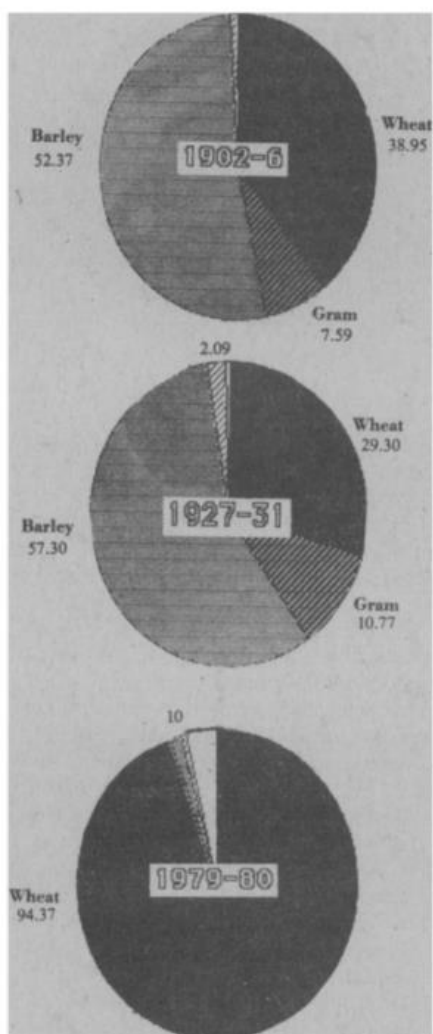
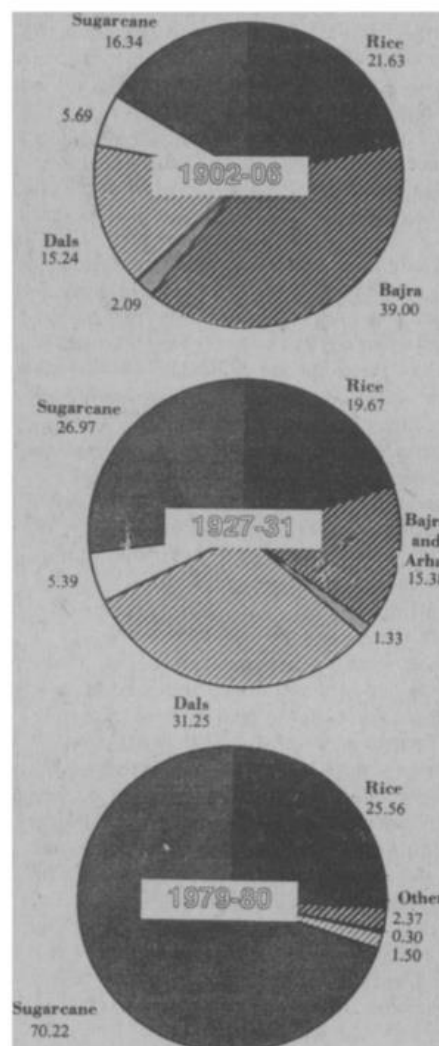


FIGURE 2: CROPPING PATTERNS IN BIJNOR TAHSIL
KHARIF (SUMMER CROPS) (in per cent)



Source: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4394731?seq=1>.

Curry leaf is an aromatic tropical and subtropical plant that originated from India. Besides its culinary purpose, curry leaf is known for its medicinal and industrial applications. Based on ethno-botanical reports and other floral distribution studies, the germplasm rich regions of curry leaf in India could be identified into six zones as Foothills of Himalaya, North-East region, Middle India, Eastern Ghats, Western Ghats and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. With respect to colour and size of leaves, habitat and flavour, the curry leaf plant is classified as brown/gamthi, regular and dwarf morphotypes. The Terai regions of Uttar Pradesh covering 15 districts (Bijnor being one of them) are rich sources of curry leaf.²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ Raghu, B.R. "Diversity and Distribution of Curry Leaf in India." *Journal of Horticultural Science*, 2020: p. 1-8.

The **history of plants and medicine** is as old as civilization and the origin of human-beings. Plants play a vital role for the existence of life on this earth, not only to provide food, shelter to living beings but also to sustain health care. The district of Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, is rich in natural plant wealth, and Shalu Chaudhary, Ravinder Kumar, and A.K. Gupta have documented the folk medicinal uses of forty tree species collected from different areas of the district.²⁷¹ The study was done through their field observations and consultations with Hakims, Vaidhyas, Tribal and the native people of the area.

IMPORTANT MEDICINAL TREES AMONG
THE PLANTS OF DISTRICT BIJNOR (U.P.) INDIA

PLATE - 1



Fig.1 *Annona squamosa* Linn.



Fig.2 *Artocarpus heterophyllus* Linn.



Fig.3 *Artocarpus lacucha* Buch. - Ham.



Fig.4 *Averrhoa carambola* Linn.



Fig.5 *Bombax ceiba* Linn.



Fig.6 *Crataeva adansonii* DC.



Fig.7 *Grevillea robusta* A. Cunningham ex R. Br.



Fig.8 *Madhuca longilolia* (Koenig) Mac Bride



Fig.9 *Mimosa elengi* Linn.



Fig.10 *Naringi crenulata* (Roxb.) Nicolson



Fig.11 *Phyllanthus emblica* Linn.



Fig.12 *Pterospermum acerifolium* (Linn.) Willd.

Source: <http://indianbotsoc.org/admin/uploaded/Shalu%20Chaudhary%20Ravinder%20&%20A.K.%20Gupta-13.pdf>.

Their study concluded that several citizens of Bijnor depend on these medicinal plants to treat common ailments. The use of these herbal remedies is not only cost effective but also safe from serious side effects.²⁷²

²⁷¹ Chaudhary, Shalu, Ravinder Kumar, A.K. Gupta. "Some Ethnomedical Trees of District Bijnor (U.P.) India." *Journal of Indian Botanical Society*, 2012: p. 138-145.

²⁷² Ibid.

In the 21st century, **cuisine and food history in prisons is worth taking note of**. Inmates in many jails of Uttar Pradesh are no longer cooking food the traditional way as modular kitchens with latest cooking gadgets became operational in 25 districts of the state in 2018. The jail of Bijnor was the first to be equipped with a modern kitchen.²⁷³

“The jail department has started modular kitchens in 25 districts with an expenditure of Rs 4.71 crores in the first phase”, IG Prisons PK Mishra informed the news agency. He also said that since the time of British rule, food inside prisons was cooked by inmates the traditional way, even in extreme winter or summer, affecting the health of prisoners. Due to this, a scheme to modernise jail kitchens was started in the state.²⁷⁴ The new kitchens are equipped with gadgets to knead flour and prepare chapattis on a large scale in roti makers. Additionally, there will be potato peelers, vegetable cutters, and arrangement of chimneys and other equipment used in modern kitchens.

Mr. Mishra also said that, “it takes about four to five hours to cook food for thousands of inmates. Now, with the help of machines the work will be completed in one to two hours. This not only saves time but also leaves a good impact on the health of prisoners involved in the cooking.”²⁷⁵

This year, in 2021, with an aim to curb illegal farming in the low-lying fertile khadar area along river Ganga bordering Bijnor-Muzaffarnagar districts, the authorities here have decided to auction ready-to-be harvested crops across 2,500 bigha of land.²⁷⁶ Sources estimated the sugarcane crop cost to be around Rs 2 crore. According to official sources, the khadar area comprises around 50,000 bigha of land along the banks of the Ganga and is owned by the irrigation, forest and revenue departments in the state. The vast area borders Bijnor, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar and Amroha districts.²⁷⁷

In winter, when the river recedes, it leaves behind a marshy but very fertile soil. At this time, farmers and land mafia from these districts grab the land to sow wheat, sugarcane and vegetables to make a quick profit. By doing so, they disturb the ecosystem by using chemical fertilizers and pesticides that seep into the ground and drain into the river. The illegal agricultural activity also affects wildlife. To curb the illegal farming, Bijnor revenue officials earmarked around 2,500 bighas of government land at Purushottampur village under Mandawar police area, where sugarcane is ready for harvesting.²⁷⁸ This time, the authorities have decided to auction the crop in a bid to deter illegal cultivation in future.

²⁷³ PTI. “Modular kitchens installed in jails in 25 districts of Uttar Pradesh.” *DNA India*, May 17, 2018.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Dabas, Harveer. “Bijnor admin to auction farm mafia’s cane crop in 2k bigha in khadar area.” *The Times of India*, January 06, 2021.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

Calendar of Events

Tithis and calendar of important events (both districts)

NOTE: * Exact dates may vary according to the Hindu Lunar Calendar/Panchang
Information from old gazetteers and panchang calendar available online

MONTH	EVENT AND DATE	AREA	DESCRIPTION
January	Sankashti Chaturthi 2nd January, 2021	Bijnor and Muzaffarnagar	As per Hindu calendar, Sankashti Chaturthi is celebrated on the 4th day of the waning moon half (Krishna Paksha) of the month. It is an auspicious festival dedicated to the Supreme Lord, Ganesha. The ritual ceremony is performed by the couples who observe the fast to get the blessings of the Lord. Devotees need to wake up early in the morning and put on clean clothes. The idol of Lord Ganesha is placed on a clean platform. Fresh flowers and Durva grass are offered to invoke the Supreme Lord. Delicacies like modaks and laddoos are placed before the Lord Ganesha. The pooja is observed in the evening after the sight of the moon. The ritual begins with chanting the Ganesh mantra and reciting the stories or the Vrata Katha.
January	Makar Sankranti 14th January, 2021	Bijnor and Muzaffarnagar	Makar Sankranti is celebrated on the 14th of January every year. Unlike most Hindu festivals which are determined as per the altering positions of the Moon and are based on the Lunar Calendar, Makar Sankranti is based on the Solar Calendar. It is customary to feast on 'Til-Gur' and enjoy a joyous session of kite-flying on Makar Sankranti. 'Til-Gur' or sesame and jaggery can be eaten in the form of laddoos or chikkis and is believed to keep the body warm, considering the cold weather during this festival. On this occasion, generally, people belonging to many different castes and cultures prefer taking a dip in holy water to mark the auspiciousness of this festival. It is also believed that those who die on this auspicious day gain Moksha and get freedom from the cycle of death and rebirth.
January	Bathing Fairs	Bijnor	Bathing fairs are held at Bijnor's Daranagar, according to William Gould. During the 1930s, meetings were held at such fairs: an example of which is Mahabir Tyagi heading a meeting of more than two thousand people.

February	Basant Panchmi 16th February, 2021	Bijnor and Muzaffarnagar	Basant Panchmi is celebrated on the fifth day (Panchami Tithi) of the bright fortnight (Shukla Paksha) of the Hindu month Magh. From this day, Vasant Ritu (the spring season) begins in India. Saraswati Puja is also performed on this day. The celebration takes place when the Panchami Tithi prevails during the first half of the day i.e. the time between sunrise and midday.
March	Mahashivratri 11th March, 2021	Muzaffarnagar	Festival of Mahashivaratri is the most important festival for the millions of devotees of Lord Shiva. The festival has been accorded a lot of significance in Hindu mythology. It says that a devotee who performs sincere worship of Lord Shiva on the auspicious day of Shivratri is absolved of sins and attains moksha. Muzaffarnagar is the main centre where kanwariyas from states like Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh congregate. A thirteen day long kanwar yatra takes place in Muzaffarnagar, which culminates in Shivratri. In North India, the kanwar yatra in Shraavan month is highly sacrosanct. The Delhi to Haridwar route is one of the most important routes for this journey of faith. Devotees have faith in the holy month of shraavan and perform the ritual of pouring Ganga water on Lord Shiva. Some believe Ravana was the first to go on the kanwar yatra while others link it with Lord Rama, and while others associate it with Shraavan, the boy who took his blind parents to kanwar yatra. This ritual plays a major part in removing the distinction between the rich and the poor as people are called bhole and bholi, male and female respectively, wear saffron robes, and have the same food from shivirs. Every year the Gram Samaj organizes Shivratri. Ekadash Rudra Shivling is also of prime importance in the complex of Bhairo ka Mandir Shivratri is a memorable day, because Dayanada Sarsawati (the founder of Arya Samaj) got enlightenment on this night. They celebrate the week preceding this day as Rishi-Bodha-Saptah and arrange discourses by the learned scholars for seven days.
March	Holi 29th March, 2021	Bijnor and Muzaffarnagar	Holi—the festival of colors—also known as Vasant Utsav, falls on the Pratipada during the dark half (Krishna Paksha) of the Chaitra Month as per Hindu Calendar. Holi is also celebrated as the arrival of spring season by taking inspiration from the colors.
March	Various fairs	Bijnor	A small fair takes place at Salabatnagar, Afzalgarh during March in the honour of Bale Sarkar. Another gathering is held in March under the name of Chhipis' fair.
March	Numaish	Muzaffarnagar	In Meerut, Nauchandi fair is held for about two weeks after holi every year and is visited by lakhs of people. After the nauchandi mela gets over in Meerut in

			<p>March-April, the fair shifts to Muzaffarnagar with a new name, Numaish. During the British rule, a 'numaish' of horses (display of horses) began in Muzaffarnagar. As time passed, this 'numaish' took the form of a trade fair where several amusement activities- from circus to puppet shows and swings to a variety of indigenous cuisine became an integral part of the event. Numaish is not a religious festival and has been given new name and identity by the government today as Jila Krishi Evam Audyogik Pradarshini but the common folk still calls it Numaish.</p>
April	Sitali Ashtami 4th April, 2021	Muzaffarnagar	<p>The series of Hindu festivals in the district actually commences with Sitala Ashtami, that falls on the 8th day of the first fortnight of Chaitra when the goddess Sitala is worshipped.</p>
April	Ramadan 14th April, 2021 to 13th May, 2021	Bijnor and Muzaffarnagar	<p>Ramadan is the ninth month of the 12-month Islamic calendar, a lunar calendar that's based on the phases of the moon. The lunar calendar falls short of the solar calendar by 11 days. During Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn to dusk each day. However, some also read the entire Quran, say special prayers and attend mosques more frequently during this time. The first pre-dawn meal of the day during Ramadan is called "suhoor." Each day's fast is broken with a meal known as "iftar." Traditionally, a date is eaten to break the fast. Iftars are often elaborate feasts celebrated with family and friends.</p> <p>Baba chand khanki Roshni urs is celebrated on ramadan in Muzaffarnagar tehsil.</p>
April	Ashtanhika Parv 17th to 26th April, 2021	Muzaffarnagar	<p>Vahelna is an important pilgrimage site for Jains. This site has a mosque, a Shiva temple and a Jain temple sharing a common wall. It is also known as Shri 1008 Parshwanath Digambar Jain Atisheya Chetra and has an idol of Lord Parshwanath. A newly built 31 ft. monolith statue of Lord Parshwanath has been installed in the Jain Mandir. Jains celebrate the birth and nirvana anniversaries of the last tirthankara, Mahavira, the former on the 13th day of the bright half of Chaitra and the latter on Dipavali day.</p> <p>Ashtanhika parv is celebrated for eight days three times a year in the month of Kartik, Phalgun and Ashad. It is celebrated from the eighth day of Shukla Paksh till Purnima/Guru Purnima every year. Their important fair 'Jain Uchacho' is dedicated to lord Mahavira, is held at Vahelna in Muzaffarnagar tehsil, in the month of Bhadra when they assemble for prayers and religious rites.</p>
April	Ram Navami 21st April, 2021	Bijnor and Muzaffarnagar	<p>Ram Navami marks the birthday of Lord Ram, who is known to be the 7th incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Each year on Chaitra Shukla Navami, (the ninth day of the</p>

			<p>bright fortnight of the Hindu Lunar month, Chaitra) Ramnavami is celebrated.</p> <p>In several temples, Sriramanavami is celebrated for nine days from the first day of Chaitra Navratri. Also, people observe fast on this day. Narration of Ramayan takes place on Rama Navami. Kirtans are organised. Idol of Shree Ram gets ready with beautiful ornaments and embellishments, and is swung on a cradle.</p> <p>In Muzaffarnagar, grand processions are taken out in various parts of the city like Nayi Mandi and temples across the city hold minor and major festivities around Ram Navmi.</p>
April	Hanuman Jayanti 27th April, 2021	Muzaffarnagar	<p>Hanuman Jayanti is celebrated on Purnima (full moon day) during the Chaitra month, the first month of the Hindu calendar. It falls a few days after Ram Navami and is believed to be the birthday of Lord Hanuman. Hanumatdham, is situated in the Shukratal town of Muzaffarnagar district and was constructed in 1987. It is a 72 ft. high idol and was installed by two prominent devotees, Sudarshan Singh Chakra and Inder Kumar.</p>
May	Eid ul-Fitr 14th May, 2021	Bijnor and Muzaffarnagar	<p>The end of Ramadan is marked by a big celebration called 'Eid ul-Fitr' (the Festival of the Breaking of the Fast). It starts the day after Ramadan ends and lasts for three days. Mosques hold special services and a special meal is eaten during daytime (the first daytime meal for a month). During Eid ul-Fitr, Muslims dress in their finest clothes, give gifts to children and spend time with their friends and family. A typical feature of this festival is the consumption of vermicelli or sewain.</p>
May	Ganga Saptami 18th May, 2021	Bijnor and Muzaffarnagar	<p>Ganga Saptami is a Hindu festival celebrated mostly in Northern parts of India. It is also known as Ganga Pujan or Ganga Jayanti. It is believed that on this day the holy river Ganga descended onto the earth. This day falls on the seventh day of the Shukla Paksha in Vaisakha month. River Ganges is considered to be the most holy and sacred river in India. This festival is mainly celebrated in the places the river Ganga and its tributaries flow. On this day devotees take a holy dip in the Ganges. It is considered to be very auspicious.</p> <p>People worship Goddess Ganga and offer several pujas and rituals on this day. Ganga Aarti is held at several ghats of the Ganges. Ganga Shobha Yatra is organized at various ghats and many people take part in it. Devotees perform deepadan on this auspicious occasion.</p>
May	Vaisakh Purnima 26th May, 2021	Muzaffarnagar	<p>The Vaisakh month is important for Sikhs as they celebrate Vaisakh Purnima. Fairs in the gurudwaras are organized.</p>

May	Urs celebrations	Muzaffarnagar	<p>Many Muslims put faith in pirs (Muslim saints). Fairs held in the district are generally urs celebration. For example, Mela Nasir Ali on the 2nd Friday of Jayistha at Jansath, and Mela Peer on Jayistha at Khand Rawale.</p> <p>On the 5th day of Shawal, 'Urs Garib' fair is celebrated at village Shoron in Budhana tehsil; and the urs of Mastan Shahin the month of Shawal at Khera Mastan in Budhana tehsil.</p>
May	Burha Babu Fair	Bijnor	<p>A fair is held in the honour of Burha Babu who is said to be an incarnation of Brahma and special patron of women and children. The few good horses in Bijnor are in the possession of the leading Zamindars who obtain them from the annual Nauchandi fair in Meerut where artistic and religious rituals are followed. Nauchandi fair can be traced back to 1672, when it was held as a one day celebration for cattle traders.</p>
June	<p>Bargad Amavasya 10th June, 2021</p> <p>Vat Savitri Purnima Vrat 24th June, 2021</p>	Muzaffarnagar	<p>On the 15th day of Jayistha (2nd month of the Hindu calendar) falls Bargad Amavasya (Vat-Savitri). On this day, married women fast for the longevity of their husband's life and offer their prayers to Vat-Vriksha. Sri Ananteshwar Mahadev Mandir in Gandhi colony witnesses a large number of women devotees on this day.</p>
June	Ganga Dussehra 20th June, 2021	Bijnor and Muzaffarnagar	<p>River Ganga is worshiped like a Goddess and it is believed that it was the tenth day of Jyeshtha bright half when she descended on earth from heaven. The day is celebrated as Ganga Dussehra. On this day, after a lot of hard work and penance of Bhagirath, a Suryavanshi king, got success to bring down the river to earth. Since then, every year the occasion of Ganga Dussehra is celebrated by performing several rites and rituals of Ganga pooja to commemorate her.</p> <p>If it is not possible to take bath in Ganga on Ganga Dussehra, people pray at some other river or reservoir or with pure water at home as per the convenience. After that one should do recital pooja in front of the idol of Ganga. The idol of Ganga is considered as Trinetra, quadrilateral, adorned with white clothes and white lotus. King Bhagirath and Himalaya should also be worshipped which is highly recommended during Ganga pooja. Lord Shiva is the prime deity to be worshipped during the Ganga Pooja as he is sole owner and holder of river Ganga and by grace of his mercy only sent the river on earth for the welfare of mankind. The donation of ten edible items mainly fruits and black sesame seeds are considered most auspicious.</p> <p>In Muzaffarnagar, the Jayistha Dasahra fair is held at Shamli, Badauli Sayed in Kairana tehsil and at Shukratal and attracts large congregations.</p>

June	Nirjala Ekadashi 21st June, 2021	Bijnor and Muzaffarnagar	There comes in total 24 Ekadashi in a year. Among them, Nirjala Ekadashi is considered the most transcendent. It is also called Nirjala Ekadashi as it is customary to not drink water from the sunrise of this day to the sunrise of Dwadashi.
July	Ashtanhika Parv 17th to 24th July, 2021	Muzaffarnagar	Vahelna is an important pilgrimage site for Jains. This site has a mosque, a Shiva temple and a Jain temple sharing a common wall. It is also known as Shri 1008 Parshwanath Digambar Jain Atisheya Chetra and has an idol of Lord Parshwanath. A newly built 31 ft. monolith statue of Lord Parshwanath has been installed in the Jain Mandir. Jains celebrate the birth and nirvana anniversaries of the last tirthankara, Mahavira, the former on the 13th day of the bright half of Chaitra and the latter on Dipavali day. Ashtanhika parv is celebrated for eight days three times a year in the month of Kartik, Phalgun and Ashad. It is celebrated from the eighth day of Shukla Paksh till Purnima/Guru Purnima every year. Their important fair 'Jain Uchacho' is dedicated to lord Mahavira, is held at Vahelna in Muzaffarnagar tehsil, in the month of Bhadra when they assemble for prayers and religious rites.
July	Id ul-Zuha 21st July, 2021	Muzaffarnagar	Id ul zuha (Bakrid) is one of the important Muslim festivals celebrated in the district, in the month of Zulhijja to commemorate the occasion when Ibrahim resolved to treat his son as an offering to mark the highest form of sacrificial spirit which was blessed by God the merciful with no injury to Ismail but with sheep's sanctification of the alter instead. The muslims say their namaz in idgahs and sacrifice sheep and goats.
July	Chhariyan fair	Muzaffarnagar	According to the district Gazetteer, 1903, the Charriyan fairs are held at Muzaffarnagar, Charthawal, Pur, Thana Bhawan, Kairana, Bhukarheri, Belra, Khatauli and several other places, the largest being that at Khatauli. A fair, attended by about a thousand persons and known by the generic name of Chhariyan-ka-mela, is held at Tisang on the ninth day of sawan, and a similar gathering occurs during the Moharram. However, the INTACH Team was unable to find if the fairs happen currently.
August	Hariyali Teej 11th August, 2021	Bijnor and Muzaffarnagar	The third day of the Shukla Paksha of the Shravan month is called Hariyali Teej or Shravani Teej. The Teej festival commemorates the women and their spirit of producing offsprings. As the season of Monsoon commences, Mother Earth is covered with green hued foliage and fragrant flora all around, the women dance and swing their way to zeal and celebration of their abundant life. The day is celebrated around the country by organizing cultural fairs and processions of

			<p>the Goddess Parvati, blessing her devotees as she goes by the town.</p> <p>A day prior to the hariyali teej, 'Sinjara' is celebrated. This day begins with the tradition of the in-laws gifting clothes, jewelry, cosmetics, henna, and sweets to their daughter-in-law. This day gives importance to the application of henna on the girls palms. The intricate patterns and designs of the henna on the palms bring joy to their faces. Application of a red colored liquid (Alta) on the feet symbolises the sacred nuptial bond.</p>
August	Naga Panchmi 13th August, 2021	Muzaffarnagar	<p>Naga panchmi falls on the 5th day of the bright half of Sravana, when the nagas or serpent Gods are worshipped by offerings of milk, flowers and rice. On these occasions, Ekadash Rudra Shivling temple is flooded with pilgrims who come with immense hope and faith. Ekadash Rudra Shivling is also of prime importance in the complex of Bhairo ka Mandir. As the name suggests, it is a collection of 11 different shivlings. The temple is more than 700 years old.</p>
August	Martyr's Fair 16th August, 2021	Bijnor	<p>During the freedom movement, on August 16, 1942, while firing the tricolor flag at the police station, Parveen Singh, resident of village Gunikhedi, and Rikkhi Singh, resident of village Askaripur, were killed when British police fired. The martyr's memorial remains in front of the police station in their memory. Every year on August 16, a martyr fair and tribute meeting is organized at the place of martyrdom.</p>
August	Muharram 19th August, 2021	Muzaffarnagar	<p>The first ten days of the month of Muharram is mourned by the Shias devoted to perpetuate the martyrdom of Imam Husain, the grandson of the prophet of Islam and his companions on the battlefield of Karbala. On Ashra, the last of these ten days which is the most important as Imam Husain was killed, on that day, tazias are taken out for burial at Karbala. Chelhum, on the 20th of Safar, falling on the 40th day of Ashra, usually marks the end of the mourning.</p> <p>The Muharram fairs are held at Kandhla in Budhana Tehsil and at Khanjahanpur, 3km away from Muzaffarnagar bus station.</p>
September	Hartalika Teej 9th September, 2021	Bijnor and Muzaffarnagar	<p>Hartalika Teej Vrat is one of the primary Vrats in Hindu religion. Hartalika Teej is celebrated on the third day of Shukla Paksha in the month of Bhadrapada. Hartalika Teej Vrat is kept without the intake of grains and water. It is believed that in order to have Lord Shiva as her husband, Goddess Parvati was the first one to observe this Vrat. Undertaking Hartalika Teej Vrat enables women with marital bliss and happiness.</p>
September	Anant Chaturdasi 19th September,	Muzaffarnagar	<p>Anant Chaturdasi, which falls on the 14th day of the later half of Bhadra, is celebrated. It is a day to worship Vishnu in his eternal form. It coincides with</p>

	2021		<p>the 10-day festival of Ganesh Chaturthi and falls on the concluding day. Ganeshdham features 35 ft. high statue of Lord Ganesha. With Hanumatdham at its back side, it is located near Sukhdeva Teela. River Tripatha flows on one side and Vat Vriksha on the other side. Anant Chaturdasi is an important day in the religious festivities of Jains too. Digambar Jains observe Paryushan or commonly known as Dashlakshana Parva, during the last ten days of Bhadra. Anant Chaturdashi is the last day of Paryushana. On this day, kshamavani, Jains ask for forgiveness for mistakes they have made intentionally or otherwise.</p>
October	Navratri 6th to 14th October, 2021	Muzaffarnagar	<p>During the month of Ashvina, Navratri is celebrated. During Navratri, Durga is worshipped for 9 days continuously in the bright half of the Ashvina. The 9th day of this is known as Durga-Navmi. The following day is Dasahra or Vijay Dasami, dedicated to the worship of Goddess Vijaya, also commemorating the victory of Ram over Ravana. Ramlila celebrations are held at different places in the district. 4 major fairs associated with Ramlila are set up in the district. Durga dham is a popular site for worshippers of Goddess Durga. 51 ft. statue lies next to lord Siva. There is also a natural cave at the site. The dham attracts lots of worshippers in times of festivals like Navratri.</p>
October	Ghatasthapana 7th October, 2021	Bijnor and Muzaffarnagar	<p>The festival of grandiose, Navratri always begins with the ritual of Ghatasthapana. The first day of Sharad Navratri commemorates the invocation of the Goddess Shakti. The Aadishakti blesses her devotees on the very first day as we perform the puja of ghatasthapana. A specific muhurat is chosen for the Kalash Sthapana by abiding by the rules designed for it. To perform the ritual, in a broad earthen pot, sow 7 grains in the garden soil and water it. Fill the Kalash with Ganga water, and tie the mauli around it. Wrap the coconut with intact husk in red cloth and tie a mauli around it. Next, place the wrapped coconut on the Kalash, as well as the mango leaves at the mouth of the Kalash. The process of Ghatasthapana invokes the Goddess into it as the prayers begin.</p>
October	Ramlila 8th to 25th October, 2021	Bijnor	<p>The Ramlila is observed by a considerable number of Hindus, especially in Dhampur.</p>
October	Barawafat 19th October, 2021	Muzaffarnagar	<p>On the 12th of the month of rabi-al-awwal falls Barawafat, which marks the birthday of Prophet Muhammad, when alms are distributed and discourses of his life and mission are held. On the 14th day of Shaban, Sab-e-barat is celebrated, which marks the birth of the 12th Imam of the Shias.</p>

November	Ashtanhika Parv 11th to 19th November, 2021	Muzaffarnagar	<p>Vahelna is an important pilgrimage site for Jains. This site has a mosque, a Shiva temple and a Jain temple sharing a common wall. It is also known as Shri 1008 Parshwanath Digambar Jain Atisheya Chetra and has an idol of Lord Parshwanath. A newly built 31 ft. monolith statue of Lord Parshwanath has been installed in the Jain Mandir. Jains celebrate the birth and nirvana anniversaries of the last tirthankara, Mahavira, the former on the 13th day of the bright half of Chaitra and the latter on Dipavali day. Ashtanhika parv is celebrated for eight days three times a year in the month of Kartik, Phalgun and Ashad. It is celebrated from the eighth day of Shukla Paksh till Purnima/Guru Purnima every year. Their important fair 'Jain Uchacho' is dedicated to lord Mahavira, is held at Vahelna in Muzaffarnagar tehsil, in the month of Bhadra when they assemble for prayers and religious rites.</p>
November	Kartik Purnima 19th November, 2021	Bijnor and Muzaffarnagar	<p>Purnima means the full moon day and the full moon that falls on Kartik month is known as Kartik Purnima. It is also known as Tripuri Purnima or Tripurari Purnima and is one of the most significant days in the traditional calendar. Kartik Purnima is celebrated as the birth anniversary of Vrinda, personification of Tulsi plant.</p> <p>The last five days of the Kartik month are considered to be the most sacred days and devotees observe fast by eating only once a day, in the afternoon, which is known as Habisha.</p> <p>Tulsi Vivah generally begins on the day of Prabodhini Ekadashi and ends on the day of Kartik Purnima. According to the Hindu scriptures, Tulsi Vivah can be celebrated on any feasible day between the Ekadashi and Kartik Purnima, in the Hindu kartik month. A majority of people perform the marriage rituals of Goddess Tulsi with Lord Shaligram, representation of Lord Vishnu, on the day of Kartik Purnima.</p> <p>Bhishma Panchaka fast starts with Prabodhini Ekadashi, and concludes on the day of Kartik Purnima. According to the Vaishnava culture, Bhishma Panchak fasting during the last five days of Kartik month holds great importance.</p> <p>It is considered appropriate to take a dip in the sacred Ganges river, or 'ganga snan'. Vaikunth Chaturdashi Puja is performed one day prior to Kartik Purnima. Shiva temples on this day perform special Puja where Lord Vishnu is worshipped along with Lord Shiva. It is on this day that devotees observe the Kartik Purnima Ganga Snan by taking a dip in the holy Ganges.</p> <p>Dev Diwali, commonly known as Diwali of Gods, is celebrated on the day of Kartik Purnima. Ancient Hindu scriptures describe that Tripurasura demon was killed by Lord Shiva on this day, and this is the reason that Kartik Purnima is also known as Tripurari Purnima</p>

			<p>in marathi. Legends describe that Gods were overjoyed with the death of Tripurasura and hence celebrated Kartik Purnima just like Diwali, by lighting earthen diyas in all the temples and at the bank of river Ganga.</p> <p>Akashdeep, mundan, deepdaan and annadaan are performed at shukla paksh ekadashi. Many women worship goddess Tulsi to bless them with a healthy marital life and a long life for their husbands.</p> <p>Shadopchar puja is performed, where 16 kinds of offerings are made to god. These rituals take place during the Kartik Purnima fair. The river Ganga is illuminated with diyas, aarti also takes place, and many devotees make donations to the poor.</p> <p>In Muzaffarnagar, The Kartiki Purnima fair at Shukratal, in Jansath tehsil is the biggest Hindu bathing fair of the district and attracts lakhs of pilgrims and saints on the banks of Ganga. Guru Nanak Jayanti is also celebrated on the same day of Kartik Purnima as it marks the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev.</p>
November	<p>Kaal Bhairav Jayanti</p> <p>26th November, 2021</p>	Muzaffarnagar	<p>In the district, Kaal bhairav Jayanti is celebrated. Bhairon ka mandir is also one of the prominent temples in the district. Every year Bhairav Kaal Ashtami Mahotsav is celebrated with great pomp and show. Kaal Ashtami is held on every eighth day of 'Krishna Paksha' of the month. Kaal bhairav Jayanti is celebrated at the end of the year. Procession of Batuk Bhairav Baba is taken out during the Mahotsav.</p>
November	Ganga Snan Fair	Bijnor	<p>It is a famous fair which takes place in Vidurkuti, Bijnor. Every year, participation is seen from lakhs of devotees. Usually, the fair is held in Balawali, Rawli, Bijnor Barrage, Vidurkuti and Jalilpur. The devotees take the ritualistic dip in the Ganga river and chant hymns. Enthusiasm runs so high that tents and camps are seen pitched before the fair even begins.</p>
November	Fairs at Daranagar and Goela	Bijnor	<p>The largest fair in Bijnor is held at Daranagar and Goela, an adjoining village at the point where the Ganges first becomes navigable and 25,000 people assemble for bathing in it on the full moon of Kartik month. There is a holy temple of Hindus dedicated to Chandi Devi, the patron deity of the Bijnor.</p>
November	Urs of Khwaja Saheb	Muzaffarnagar	<p>Many Muslims put faith in pirs (Muslim saints). Fairs held in the district are generally urs celebration. Urs of Khwaja Saheb in the months of November-December are held at Kairana.</p>

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Back Cover: Watercolour of Patthargarh Fort in Najibabad from 'Views by Seeta Ram from Mohumdy to Gheen Vol. V' produced for Lord Moira, afterwards the Marquess of Hastings, by Sita Ram between 1814-15. Marquess of Hastings, the Governor-General of Bengal and the Commander-in-Chief (r. 1813-23), was accompanied by artist Sita Ram (flourished c.1810-22) to illustrate his journey from Calcutta to Delhi between 1814-15.

Najibabad was founded in the mid-18th century by Najib-ud-Daula in Uttar Pradesh, who constructed the Pathargarh fort, within a mile of the city, in 1755. Patthargarh, also known as Najafgarh, was built from the stones of Mordhwaj, an ancient fort within the area. View of the Patthargarh fort outside Najibabad, with the mountains beyond. Inscribed below: 'Fort of Nagibabad.

Presently, Najibabad is a city in Bijnor district in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh.

Image source: British Library- <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/addorimss/p/019addor0004777u00000000.html>

