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## LORD BUDDHA'S ENLIGHTENMENT SITE - BODH GAYA

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### Abstract

Bodh Gaya is also connoted as Buddha Gaya, town, southwestern Bihar state, north-eastern India. It is an important and sacred Buddhist pilgrimage centre in the world. The temple is well-known for being the place where Gautama Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment. Lord Buddha practice meditation under Bodhi tree. To indicate the spot, the Mahabodhi Temple was constructed. The Mahabodhi Temple, one of the few brick buildings still standing from ancient India, it had a significant impact on the development of architecture over the years. The Mahabodhi Temple is a peripheral tourist destination. It is cram-full with monasteries and temples constructed by almost every Buddhist country to proclaim their presence. Lord Buddha meditated for seven weeks at seven separate locations nearby, reflecting on his experience. Mahabodhi Temple Complex Book store which provides immense selection of Buddhist literature as well as publications on Buddhist history. It was the wide-reaching Buddha statue in India. It is familiar as the 80-foot Lord Buddha, seated in meditation on a lotus. The Archaeological Society of India Museum was integration to the Brahmanical and Buddhist religious systems. Lord Buddha lived in DUNGESHWARI HILLS for a span before moving to Bodh Gaya in search of enlightenment.

**Keywords:** Mahabodhi Temple, Bodhi Tree, Great Buddha Statue, UNESCO Site.

### Introduction

Bodhgaya is a remarkable location and it is the site of Lord Buddha's enlightenment. It is a small village on the bank of the Phalgu River in Bihar, south of Gaya. The Mahabodhi temple complex, where the "Bodhi tree" is located, was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2002 because it is one of the four most significant pilgrimage sites associated to the life of Gautama Buddha. The other three are Kushinagar, Lumbini and Sarnath.

### History

Since Buddha's enlightenment, the location has gone by a number of names depending on this important historical event. It is now known as Uruvela. The word Uruvela was abandoned within two centuries of the enlightenment in favour of new terms such as Sambodhi, which means "Complete Enlightenment" Bodhimanda, which means "Awakening Position" Vajrasana, which means "Diamond Throne" and Mahabodhi, which means "Great Enlightenment".

When Emperor Asoka visited the location during his pilgrimage in the year 260 BC, the tenth year of his reign, the city was given the name Sambodhi. He made the decision to construct a temple to honour Buddha's enlightenment. Vajrasana throne, which is believed to be the original place where the Buddha sat and meditated, was located in the centre of the open pavilion that served as the first temple's construction. The existing temple construction originates to the Gupta era in the sixth century AD and has undergone numerous renovations over the years. According to legend, the Chinese traveller Hieun Tsang visited the city in the seventh century and noted the temple's existence.

The temple was lost in the ruins by the 13<sup>th</sup> century as Buddhism started to dwindle and interest in the city vanished. Alexander Cunningham, a retired British army engineer with a passion for archaeology and ancient history, carried out extensive excavations and reconstructions that led to the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century rediscovery of Bodh Gaya. The town's name was changed to Buddha Gaya or Bodh Gaya this time. Bodhgaya, despite being mostly known for the Mahabodhi Temple and Complex, is a minor tourist destination that is overflowing with monasteries and temples constructed by almost every Buddhist country to proclaim their presence.

### Mahabodhi Temple

In Bodh Gaya, the site of the Buddha's enlightenment, there is a Buddhist shrine called the Mahabodhi Temple. In the Indian state of Bihar, Bodh Gaya is around 96 km (60 mt) from Patna (Capital of Bihar). The sacred Bodhi tree is located next to the temple, on its western side. The location is referred to as Bodhimanda and the nearby monastery as Bodhimanda Vihara in the Pali Canon. The tallest tower rises 55 metres (180 feet) above ground.



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According to traditional accounts, Siddhartha Gautama, a young Indian prince who observed the suffering in the world and desired to put an end to it, arrived in the forested banks of the Falgu River, close to the Indian city of Gaya, approximately 530 BC. Under a peepul tree (Ficus religiosa or Sacred Fig), subsequently known as the Bodhi tree, Buddha practised meditation there. According to Buddhist texts, Siddhartha found enlightenment and the solutions he was looking for after three days and three nights. To denote the spot, the Mahabodhi Temple was constructed.

Lord Buddha then meditated for the following seven weeks at seven separate locations nearby, reflecting on his experience. Several specific locations in the contemporary Mahabodhi Temple are connected to the customs surrounding these seven weeks:

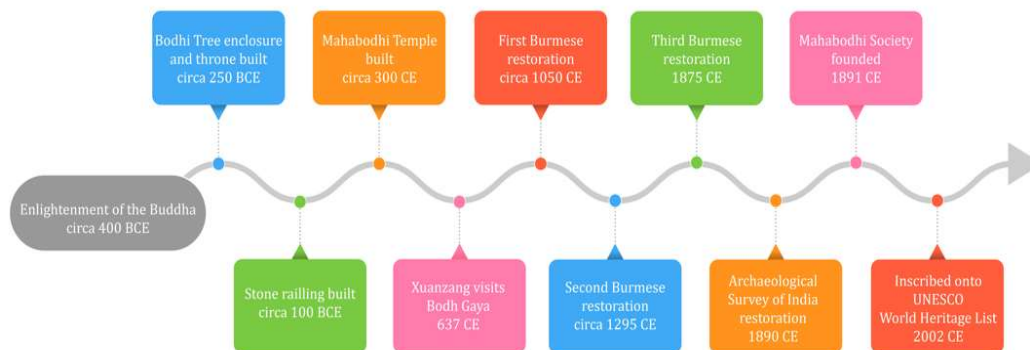
- The first week was spent meditating under the Bodhi tree.
- Lord Buddha kept his position and continued to silently ponder the Bodhi tree during the second week. The Animeshlocha Stupa, also known as the unblinking stupa or shrine, which is situated to the northeast of the Mahabodhi Temple complex, serves as a marker for this location. A statue of Lord Buddha is there, gazing intently at the Bodhi tree.
- According to legend, Lord Buddha frequently travelled between the Bodhi tree and the site of the Animeshlocha Stupa. This path, today known as Ratnachakarma or the Jewel Walk, is said to have sprouted lotus flowers according to tradition

Under Sir Alexander Cunningham's leadership, the British government of India started to renovate the Mahabodhi Temple in the 1880s. Shortly after, in 1891, the mahant objected to the Sri Lankan Buddhist leader Anagarika Dharmapala's campaign to reclaim sovereignty of the temple for Buddhists. In 1949, when authority shifted from the Hindu mahant to the state government of Bihar, which set up a temple management council, the effort had some success. Nine people make up the committee, and the chairman and the majority of them are required to be Hindus by law. Anagarika Munindra, a Bengali man who had been an active member of the Maha Bodhi Society, served as Mahabodhi first chief monk under the management committee.

One of the earliest brick buildings to have survived in eastern India is the Mahabodhi Temple, which is built of brick. It is regarded as a remarkable illustration of Indian brickwork and had a significant impact on the evolution of following architectural traditions. The current temple is one of the earliest and most impressive constructions made completely of brick from the Gupta period, according to UNESCO. The central tower of the Mahabodhi Temple is 55 metres (180 feet) tall and underwent extensive restoration in the 19th century. Four additional smaller towers built in the same design around the centre tower.

Approximately two-meter-high stone railings enclose the Mahabodhi Temple on all four sides. Two unique types may be seen in the railings, both in terms of design and the materials employed. The older ones, constructed of sandstone, date to around 150 BCE, while the others, built of unpolished granite, are thought to date to the Gupta era (300 - 600 CE). The older railings depict images like Surya, the Hindu sun god, riding a chariot driven by four horses, and Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth, being bathed by elephants. Figures of stupas (reliquary shrines) and garudas can be seen on the more recent fences (eagles). Lotus flower images are also frequently seen. Mahabodhi Temple Complex bookstore provides a broad selection of Buddhist literature as well as publications on Buddhist history and the Mahabodhi Temple.

## Bodh Gaya Timeline



Source: <https://smarthistory.org/bodh-gaya/>



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## The Bodhi Tree

The Bodhi Tree, 100 kilometres south of Patna in the Indian state of Bihar, is one of Buddhism's most well-known and revered holy sites due to the extensive historical significance associated with it. Prince Siddhartha Gautama, a spiritual guide who would eventually go by the name of the Buddha, acquired enlightenment under this tree. Prince Siddhartha was reportedly required to sit under this tree for seven days and meditate. Later, the location where he had seated was transformed into a shrine called as Animisalocana Cetiya. The 7th century saw the construction of a tiny temple next to the Bodhi tree.

One of the four important Buddhist pilgrimage sites is the Bodhi tree, a regularly visited tourist destination. In fact, it is thought that the Anandabodhi tree in Sravasti and the Bodhi tree in Anuradhapura, both of which are noteworthy locations that are mentioned at the history of Buddhism, were propagated from this tree in Bodh Gaya.

Since Lord Buddha's time, the aura of the Bodhi tree and the temple complex in which it is housed have drawn yogis, sages, and people who practise meditation. Great and well-known spiritual luminaries including Buddhajana, Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, Nagarjuna, and Atisha resided and meditated under the Bodhi Tree, which is significant both historically and religiously. In addition, Bodh Gaya is well-known for the nearby Mahabodhi Temple Complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This area is particularly fascinating to folks who are religious and historical buffs.

## Great Buddha Statue

It was the largest Buddha statue in India when it was introduced by the Dalai Lama in 1989. It is known as the 80-foot Buddha, seated in meditation on a lotus. This statue makes feel like a speck in space because it was constructed over the course of seven years with the assistance of 12,000 masons and is located close to the Mahabodhi Temple Complex.

## Archaeological Society of Museum

The Archaeological Society of India Museum was founded to house historic items, largely from the Pala era, that belonged to the Brahmanical and Buddhist religious systems. The galleries, courtyard, and veranda of the museum, which is housed inside the Mahabodhi Temple Complex, are filled with displays of magnificent stone and bronze statues and sculptures, panels, rods, plaques, pillars, railings, etc.

## Sujatha Temple

The Sujatha Temple honours Sujatha, a devout tribal woman who presented pudding to Gautam Buddha. In order to achieve enlightenment, Gautam Buddha is claimed to have given up the materialistic life, including food, and consumed the pudding as his first meal after years of famine. Due to the belief that the sacrifice saved Lord Buddha's life, the temple is regarded as having significant religious significance.

## Daijokyo Buddhist Temple

Those looking for peace in lovely surroundings may find it at Daijokyo Buddhist Temple. The 64 foot tall Great Buddha Statue built of sandstone and granite is the temple's most noticeable feature. It attracts a lot of tourists. The temple also has a spacious meditation hall where visitors can relax and take enjoy the serene atmosphere in surroundings.

## Dungeshwari Hills

Lord Buddha lived in Dungeshwari Hills for a while before moving to Bodh Gaya in search of enlightenment. The caves that Gautam Buddha used as a refuge and a place of meditation are the hills most famous feature. Even today, amidst the breath-taking natural surroundings, Buddhist stupas and shrines can still be found. The picturesque setting of the Dungeshwari Hills is also a popular hiking location that attracts a lot of trekkers.

## Conclusion

Buddhism is the faith in kindness and empathy and equality. It gave the arena a leader, teacher, and truth-seeker who contributed his unmatched tenants of lifestyles, he is none aside from Gautama Buddha. The location in Bihar's Gaya district, according to the administration, largely draws seniors for religious and spiritual tourism. Bodhgaya is the most treasured location for Buddhists worldwide and has a magnetic pull of its own. The Bihari government needs to manage its expanding population while also developing the nearby communities. As pilgrims and visitors are constantly bothered when they visit the nearby locations, it paints a very pitiful picture of the country. The Mahabodhi Temple forbids the use of cell phones and it maintain the calm and quietness.



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