

Significance of sites covered on Shri Ramayana Yatra



Ayodhya: Ancient city of Ayodhya is the birthplace of Lord Rama and the setting of the epic Ramayana. It used to be the capital of the ancient Kosala kingdom. Owing to the belief as the birthplace of Rama, Ayodhya is regarded as one of the seven most important pilgrimage sites for Hindus. The Ram Janambhoomi temple that marks the birth spot of Ram was demolished by Mughal emperor Babur and a mosque erected in its place. Present day Ayodhya is located about 8 km away from Faizabad city on the right bank of the **Saryu River** in Uttar Pradesh. The newly erected **Ram Lalla temple** was consecrated on 22.01.2024.



Nandigram: This is a small township about 20 kms from Ayodhya. It is said to be the place where Bharat lived while Lord Ram was in exile for 14 years. Bharat was away when Ram was exiled. When he returned, he learned that he was to be the king in Ram's absence. Greatly disturbed by this news, Bharat went to Chitrakoot to ask Rama to come back and rule the kingdom. When Ram refused to return back to Ayodhya, Bharat asked Lord Ram to give his wooden sandals (padukas) and that he would worship them and rule Ayodhya on behalf of him. It was here at Nandigram where Bharat is believed to have lived and ruled the kingdom of Ayodhya for next 14 years. **Ram Bharat Milap temple** marks the spot where the brothers met

after Ram returned from Lanka after killing Ravana. The temple vibrates with the bhakti of Bharata abiding faith and love for Ram.



Sitamarhi (Bihar): It is located adjacent to Nepal. It owes its prominence primarily to the epic Ramayana as one of its central figures, Sita is believed to have been discovered here by King Janak. Considered as the birthplace of Sita, the town and its nearby villages are replete with tales from this ancient Hindu epic. Numerous temples profess their association directly or indirectly to Sita and recount events from her life. **Punaura dham** is believed to be the place from where King Janak had discovered Sita while plowing the field. **Janki Mandir** at Sitamarhi is believed to be the birthplace of Sita.



Janakpur (Nepal): Janakpur in Nepal, is close to the Indian border. It is believed to be the capital of King Janak's kingdom, Mithila. It is from Janakpur where Sita's marriage with Lord Ram had taken place.



The prime attraction of Janakpur is the magnificent **Janaki temple**. The city is a must visit for tourists wishing to experience Nepal's Indian culture. Ancient artistic tradition related to Lord Ram and Sita can be observed in plenty in Janakpur along with paintings of their marriage. Every nook and corner of the town hosts a temple of one or other deity thus imparting Janakpur's identity as a holy city. **Ram Sita Vivaha Mandap, Dhanusha dham, Gangasagar lake** are some of the sacred spots of Janakpur.



Buxar: The city in present day Bihar is one of the places visited by Lord Ram during his exile. This is believed to be the place where he killed the demoness, Tadaka. In order to absolve himself of the sins of killing a woman, Ram is believed to have taken a bath in the Ganga here. This is believed to be the **Ram Rekha ghat**. Near to the ghat, Ram had made a Shivlinga with his own hands which is the present day **Rameshwarnath temple**.



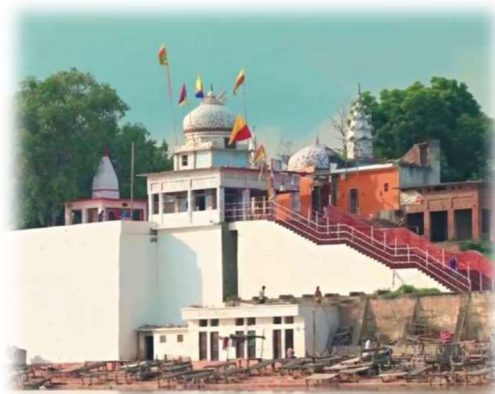
Varanasi: Once known as Benares, Banaras or Kashi, is a historical city in northern **India**. The city is sacred to Hindus and Jains and also one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, with settlements dating back to the 11th century BC. Many Hindus believe that dying in Varanasi brings salvation/nirvana. Considered as the abode of Lord Shiva, Varanasi is situated on the banks of River Ganges, which is believed to have the power of washing away all of one's sins. **Kashi Vishwanath Temple** is dedicated to Lord Shiva. **Sankat Mochan Temple** is a temple dedicated to Lord Hanuman. It is believed that "Hanuman Chalisa" was composed here by Tulsidas. **Tulsi Manas Temple** is dedicated to Indian bhakti poet Goswami Tulsidas who is also the author of Ramcharitmanas. Constructed in 1964 in white marble, the temple has Ramcharitmanas engraved on its walls.



Sita Samahit Sthal, Sitamadhi: This temple dedicated to Sita is situated between Allahabad and Varanasi. As the name suggests, this is believed to be built on the spot where Sita is believed to have immersed herself into the earth or *dharti*, her mother.



Shringverpur: It is a picturesque place which is located about 40 km from Allahabad on the road to Lucknow. It is believed that it was here that Lord Ram crossed Ganga while on his way to exile along with Sita and Lakshman. The village has also gained eminence as the capital of the Kingdom of Nishadraj (King of Fishermen). The excavation here unearthed a temple dedicated to Shringi Rishi, from whom this place is believed to take its name. It is believed that Lord Ram, Sita and Lakshman put up for a night here, on the invitation of Nishadraj, before proceeding to the jungles on exile. The environment of Shringverpur is serene and scenic.



Prayagraj or erstwhile Allahabad: one of the largest cities of Uttar Pradesh and is steeped in mythology, history, religion and culture. For those well versed with the Ramayana, Prayag is where Lord Rama, Sita and Lakshman spent some time before proceeding to nearby Chitrakoot.

Prayagraj is also one of the four sites of the Kumbh Mela. Organized once every 12 years, it is the one of the largest religious gatherings. **Triveni Sangam** is a holy site for the Hindus where the three rivers - Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati meet. It is believed that a dip in the holy waters will wash away all your sins. Lord Rama is believed to have spent some time here at the ashram of **Sage Bharadwaj**, before proceeding to Chitrakoot.



Chitrakoot: the town interestingly lies half in Madhya Pradesh and the other half in Uttar Pradesh. Chitrakoot's spiritual legacy stretches back to legendary ages. It was in these deep forests of Chitrakoot that Ram, Sita and his brother Lakshman spent a few months of their fourteen years of exile. The great sage Atri and his wife, Sati Anusuya, Dattatreya, Maharshi Markandeya, Valmiki and various other sages, seers, devotees meditated. It was here that the principal trinity of the Hindu pantheon, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, took their incarnations. This is one among the important places connected to Ramayana where Bharat persuaded Lord Rama to return back to Ayodhya and where Lord Rama performed his father Dasharatha's last rites.



Nasik: During his exile, Lord Rama moved from Chitrakoot to Panchavati in the Dandaka Forest. Today **Panchvati** is identified as Nasik in Maharashtra on the banks of the river Godavari. Nasik has several Rama temples, along with a Lakshmana temple which is believed to be the only one in the world and a cave called **Sita Gupha** where Rama, Lakshmana and Sita are believed to have prayed to Lord Shiva. The place Panchavati gets its name from there having been five Banyan trees when Rama arrived here. Even the town Nasik derives its name from being the place where Shurpanakha's nose fell when chopped off by Lakshman. Aside that

it in close vicinity to **Trimbakeshwar** that houses the Shiva Temple, which is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas. The current temple was built by Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao after being destroyed by Aurangzeb.



Hampi: the architecturally rich temple town and former capital of the Vijayanagara Empire is situated in the Northern part of Karnataka. It was one of the richest and largest cities in the world during its prime. Hampi is also world famous for its stunning style of temple architecture which dates back to the Vijayanagara reign.



The place has strong mythological association with the great Indian epic Ramayana. The fourth chapter (Kanda) of Ramayana mentions Kishkinda as the citadel of a king named Bali. This is believed to be the place where Lord Ram and Lakshman met Lord Hanuman while in search of Sita. The **Anjaneya Hill**, just across the river is believed to be the place where Anjana gave birth to Hanuman. **Vittala Temple** at the banks of Tungabhadra is in the form of a chariot and is known for its fascinating musical pillars.



Rameshwaram: is a town in Ramanathapuram district in Tamil Nadu. It is located on Pamban Island separated from mainland India by the Pamban channel and is about 50 kilometres from Mannar Island, Sri Lanka. It is connected to mainland India by the Pamban Bridge.

Rameshwaram is considered to be one of the holiest places in India to Hindus, and part of the Char Dham pilgrimages. It is believed that Ram arrived at the seashore of Rameswaram trying to find a way to cross the sea to reach Lanka where Sita was being held by Ravana. It was Hanuman who had come here first on his search for Sita. He being the son of Vayu, the Wind God, had just taken giant leap across the sea. Rama had to find a way to cross the sea safely with his army of Vanaras. Rameswaram is where Rama decided to build the sea bridge and that is why one of the names of the island is Setu, the Bridge. It is also the place where Ravana's brother Vibhishana left Lanka and joined Rama in his battle of righteousness. Rama held Vibhishana's coronation here and crowned him as the king of Lanka. It is here that Ram had worshipped Shiva which is the present day Ramanathaswamy Temple. The Shiva lingam is one of the twelve sacred Jyotirlingas of India.